
THE LONG TRAIL

By Hamlin Garland

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AVILA COLLEGE



THE LONG TRAIL



[See page 13

"HE SPREAD OUT A MAP OF THE BRITISH NORTHWEST"

HAMLIN GARLAND

THE
LONG TRAIL

EDITED BY
BARBARA GRACE SPAYD



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HE SPREAD OUT A MAP OF THE BRITISH NORTH-
WEST *Frontispiece*

"DID YOU SEE TWO MEN WITH THREE BALD-
FACED SORREL HORSES AMONG THEM?"
Facing p. 90

"THIS BOAT IS FULL OF GOLD, AND ALL SKAGWAY
IS OUT IN A BIG RUSH INTO THE ATLIN LAKE
COUNTRY" *Facing p.* 176

"WE'VE GOT IT, SON; WE'VE GOT THE STUFF"
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PREFACE

TO THE READERS OF "THE LONG TRAIL"

I mount and mount toward the sky,
The eagle's heart is mine.
I ride to put the clouds below
Where silver lakelets shine.
The roaring streams wax white with snow,
The granite peaks draw near,
The blue sky widens, violets grow,
The air is frosty clear.
And so from cliff to cliff I rise,
The eagle's heart is mine;
Above me, ever-broadening skies—
Below, the river's shine.

—Hamlin Garland

If stories of adventure interest you, if mountains lure you, if a desire to follow *the trail of the goldseekers* grips you, if stories of the West by Jack London, Mark Twain, and Bret Harte fascinate you, then you will enjoy *The Long Trail* by Hamlin Garland.

P R E F A C E

Hamlin Garland, one of America's foremost writers of realistic stories of local color, spent his boyhood days on the plains and the prairies of the Middle Border. In the early nineties he dreamed often of the "High Country" through which he had passed on a journey to California with his parents. Unable to resist his desire to "mount and mount toward the sky," in July 1897 he with his brother set forth for a study of the Sioux in the Indian reservations of the Northwest. It was on this journey that he heard in Missoula, Montana, that "a steamer had just landed at Seattle, bringing from Alaska nearly three million dollars in gold-dust, and that the miners who owned the treasure had said, 'We dug it from the valley of the Yukon, at a point called the Klondike, a thousand miles from anywhere. . . .'" A few weeks later he visited his boyhood friend Burton Babcock at Anacortes, who he discovered "was aflame with the desire to join the rush of the goldseekers."

Early in the following year Hamlin Garland recorded this significant note in his diary: "My Grant life is now so nearly complete that I feel free to begin a work which I have long medi-

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tated. I began to dictate, today, the story of my life as a boy and man in the West. In view of my approaching perilous trip into the North I want to leave a fairly accurate chronicle of what I saw and what I did on the Middle Border. The truth is, with all my trailing about in the Rocky Mountains I have never been in a satisfying wilderness. It is impossible, even in Wyoming, to get fifty miles from settlement. I long to undertake a journey which demands hardihood, and so, after careful investigation, I have decided to go into the Yukon Valley by pack train over the British Columbian Mountains, a route which offers a fine and characteristic New World adventure."

He considered this perilous adventure into Alaska his "last chance to do a bit of real mountaineering, of going to school to the valiant wilderness, . . . of winning a master's degree in hardihood." He expressed his feelings thus:

The way is long and cold and lone—

But I go!

It leads where pines forever moan

Their weight of snow—

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But I go!

There are voices in the wind which call;
There are shapes which beckon to the plain.
I must journey where the peaks are tall,
And lonely herons clamor in the rain.

In spite of misgivings because of his mother's failing health and her loneliness he met Burton Babcock at Ashcroft in British Columbia on April 15, 1898 to follow with him the Telegraph Trail to Teslin Lake, twelve hundred miles to the northwest. The details of this expedition he tells in *The Trail of the Gold-seekers*.

In *The Long Trail* Jack Henderson, a young high-school boy of Cedarbank, Minnesota goes to the Klondike over the Telegraph Trail in the same spirit in which his father had followed the Overland Trail of 'forty-nine. Before Jack started out on *the long trail*, he had said he would win. Read Hamlin Garland's account of Jack's adventures in the vast wildernesses of the great Northwest to discover whether the dreams he had dreamed of success in the gold fields of the Yukon were realized.

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HAMLIN GARLAND

A WISCONSIN valley in which there was a mingling of youth, firelight, music, and moaning winds, formed for Hamlin Garland during the first nine years of his life a magical world, which, he writes, can never return "till the coulee meadows bloom again unscarred of spade or plow." At night from the doorstone of their farm home the children listened to the "bats whirl and squeak in the odorous dusk," to the "night hawks whiz and boom," to the plaintive note of the whippoorwill, and watched the fireflies in the grass while the moon rose over the woods beyond, in which bears, wolves, and wildcats held sway. To the west of the Garland farm of one hundred and sixty acres in Green's Coulee was a road along the LaCrosse River; to the east were the wooded hills; to the north the homes of only two families; and beyond, the land of the Red

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Men, from which their hunters came down through the meadows to the trading post at LaCrosse. Often these Indian hunters, unannounced and without knocking, walked into the little cabin to enjoy the food and the warmth of the Garland kitchen. On one occasion, as Frank, Hamlin Garland's younger brother, deposited an armful of wood for the stove, an Indian patted him on the head and said admiringly, "Small papoose, heap work—good!"

Hamlin Garland was born September 16, 1860. His first connected recollections of his early boyhood are associated with the return of his father in 1864 after an absence of almost two years. He had left his little family in answer to the call of his country to join Grant's army at Vicksburg. Thus the first impressions of life were tinged by a martial tone for Hamlin Garland, then a lad not quite five years old, who with his sister Harriet two years older and his brother Frank two years younger listened to the chants of the war sung by his father, to his stories of battles, and to his descriptions of the marches of the soldiers. Ham-

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lin Garland's story "The Return of a Private" gives a vivid picture of that homecoming to the little cabin in Wisconsin.¹

Mingled with these Civil War stories are memories of his father's tales of camp life in pine forests of northern Wisconsin, of the skill and prowess of loggers whom he directed in piloting rafts of logs from Big Bull Falls down the Wisconsin River to sawmills in Dubuque and other Mississippi River ports. Side by side with these memories Hamlin Garland recollects the spinning wheel, carding combs, and candle molds, significant of only a few of the many tasks of a pioneer woman. He cherishes the impressions of his mother's sweet voice, of her strong but gentle arms about him as she tucked him into the trundle bed pulled out each night for the children.

Journeys beyond the hills to the east to visit the McClintocks, Mrs. Garland's family, were memorable events. The pause on the hilltop to rest the horses was an occasion for the children to clamber up from the straw in the bot-

¹ Read "The Return of a Private" printed with permission of the author on pages 267-301.

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tom of the farm wagon for a view of the LaCrosse valley below, of bare cliffs above, and of beautiful wooded hills to the northeast. Hamlin Garland, having inherited the McClintock love of music, poetry, beauty, and nature, felt the charm of the scene. Of his heroes, his uncles, who were hunters, athletes, and skilled horsemen, he writes: "To most of their definite, practical, orderly, and successful New England neighbors, my uncles were merely a good-natured, easy-going lot of 'fiddlers,' but to me, as I grew old enough to understand them, they became a group of potential poets, bards, and dreamers, inarticulate and moody. They fell easily into somber silence. Even Frank, the most boisterous and outspoken of them all, could be thrown into sudden melancholy by a melody, a line of poetry, or a beautiful landscape. . . . They furnished much of the charm and poetic suggestion of my childhood; most of what I have in the way of feeling for music, for rhythm, I derive from my mother's side of the house, for it was almost entirely Celt in every characteristic. She her-

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self was a wordless poet, a sensitive singer of sad romantic songs."

Grandfather Garland was a carpenter and a leader in his church in the village of Onalaska at the mouth of the Black River. A native of Maine, he was "a Yankee, as concentrated a bit of New England as was ever transplanted to the border." His wife was an invalid confined to her chair—always busy, never idle—but not too busy to find in the receptacles of wall pockets within her reach a piece of candy or a stick of licorice root for her grandson as a reward for being a good boy. Her influence in the community and upon her grandchildren was literary. She shared with them New England traditions, her love for the poems of Whit-tier and Longfellow, and her sorrow at the time of the death of Abraham Lincoln. Her son, Hamlin Garland's father, was by nature an orator and a lover of the drama. His mind was clear, positive, and definite. He was orderly, resolute, and thorough in all he did, demanding of his children obedience to his will.

Onalaska, the post-office for Green's Coulee,

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was a "boom-town," in which, Mr. Garland tells us, "booms or yards for holding pine logs laced the quiet bayou and supplied several large mills with timber. Busy saws clamored from the islands and great rafts of plank and lath and shingles were made up and floated down into the Mississippi and on to southern markets." The spires of LaCrosse were visible in the dim distance. These and the whistles of steamships were intriguing to young Hamlin Garland, who longed to see the market place to which their grain was carried, the sea, and the lands beyond.

The infrequent visits to the McClintocks at Salem and to the Garlands in Onalaska were events in the daily routine of duties that filled the lives of the Garland children, whose father believed in service. At the age of seven Hamlin Garland brought firewood to the kitchen, broke nubbins for the calves, shelled corn for the chickens, assisted in making rafting pins from split oak blocks, and in the summer with the assistance of his sister Harriet drove the cows to pasture and carried switchel in a jug hung in the middle of a long stick to the men

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in the hay-fields. Clusters of delicious strawberries tossed up occasionally during the haying season, the excitement of harvest time, the feast for the neighbors who assisted, and afternoon quilting bees are some of the happier memories of this son of the Middle Border.

The *Bible* and a *Farmer's Annual* made up the Garland library in Green's Coulee. Born with a hunger for print Hamlin Garland spent many an hour in winter lying on his stomach perusing these and spelling out the continued stories in the county paper. As has been suggested, his first literary instruction was contributed by his Grandmother Garland. School days had their beginning in a neighboring farm house and were continued in the public school at Onalaska. The road from the Garland farm past the village cemetery to the school was beset with dangers imaginary and otherwise for a lad of seven. Wildcats were plentiful around the limestone cliffs, bears had been seen under the oak trees in the woods, and diamond-back rattle snakes, black snakes, and blue racers infested the hillsides. The two-story wooden school house was located some distance

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back from the river and near sand dunes that stimulated visions of camels, Arabs, and deserts, and provided slides for the boys on dry days and cave digging on rainy days during recess. But the river with its island mills, its log booms, and its drivers walking the rolling logs with their pike-poles or leaping from one rolling log to another, held more alluring and dramatic interest for the boys. "The piles of slabs, the mounds of sawdust, the intermittent, ferocious snarl of the saws, the slap of falling lumber, the never ending fires eating up the refuse—all these sights and sounds," writes Hamlin Garland, "made a return to school difficult. Even the life around the threshing machine seemed a little tame in comparison with the life of the boom."

Stirred by the pioneer impulse and lured by the prairies he had crossed on an exploring trip into Minnesota before the war, Hamlin Garland's father, resenting the stumps and ridges that interfered in the plowing of his unbroken land, sold his farm in Green's Coulee. For this man, reared in the school of self-reliance and resolution, the end of the rainbow

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with its pot of gold was to be found only in Iowa. During the days of preparation the children did not sense the significance of the coming change. They did not know the sorrow their mother was experiencing in leaving their home, their relatives, and their friends to go on a long, cold ride in February to an unknown land on the border of American civilization.

“Forward march!” With a last look at the coulee home the Garland caravan set out for the frontier—a bob-sled burdened with household treasures, a little herd of kine, and for Mrs. Garland and the children a “pung” drawn by old Josh, a fleabitten gray. Many emotions were stirred in Hamlin Garland by the sights and wonders of that two-day journey to their new home, a low log cabin that had been built for the Garlands two miles west of Hesper.

“All my memories of this farm,” writes Hamlin Garland, “are of the fiber of poetry. The silence of the snowy aisles of the forest, the whining flight of partridges, the impudent bark of squirrels, the quavering voices of owls and coons, the music of the winds in the high

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trees—all these impressions unite in my mind like parts of a woodland symphony. I soon learned to distinguish the raccoon's mournful call from the quavering cry of the owl, and I joined the hired man in hunting rabbits from under the piles of brush in the clearing. Once or twice some ferocious larger animal, possibly a panther, hungrily yowled in the impenetrable thickets to the north, but this only lent a still more enthralling interest to the forest." To the east was a village built by Friends, to the north was a colony of Norwegians, to the west a mile distant was the schoolhouse which the *Yankees* and the *Norskies* of the district attended. Between these two factions a bitter boyish feud arose, a note of discord mingled with impressions of a woodland symphony.

Joys and hardships of pioneers crowded their memories as regretfully the Garlands in March of the second spring left the log cabin, the oaks that sheltered it, the spring—a never failing fountain of water which gushed forth from the limestone rock about eighty rods north of the cabin—the plum trees, the cherry trees, the odorous grapevines, the blackberry thicket,

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the nuts, the radiant meadow phlox, and the tall tiger lilies. Their caravan followed the pioneers' trail to a place six miles farther west. In August Mr. Garland, still dreaming of the free lands beyond, sold the new farm.

Once more the Garland family, which little baby Jessie had joined in their beloved cabin near Hesper, set out for the middle border in wagons followed by their herd of cattle. After another two-day journey they reached their cabin, a mere shanty, the sixth in which Mrs. Garland had made a home since her marriage. By daylight the children discovered they were surrounded by what Hamlin Garland describes as "the shelterless sweep of the prairie." After they had climbed to the roof of their rented house "to peek over the edge of the prairie," writes Hamlin Garland, "something grandly significant happened. Upon a low hill to the west a herd of horses suddenly appeared running swiftly, led by a beautiful sorrel pony with a shining white mane. On they came like a platoon of cavalry rushing down across the open sod which lay before our door. The leader

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moved with lofty and graceful action, easily out-stretching all his fellows. Forward they swept, their long tails floating in the wind like banners—on in a great curve as if scenting danger in the smoke of our fire. The thunder of their feet filled me with delight. Surely, next to a herd of buffalo this squadron of wild horses was the most satisfactory evidence of the wilderness into which we had been thrust.

“Riding as if to intercept the leader, a solitary herder now appeared, mounted upon a horse which very evidently was the mate of the leader. He rode magnificently, and under him the lithe mare strove resolutely to overtake and head off the leader. All to no purpose! The halterless steeds of the prairie snorted derisively at their former companion, bridled and saddled, and carrying the weight of a master. Swiftly they thundered across the sod, dropped into a ravine, and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

“Silently we watched the rider turn and ride slowly homeward. The plain had become our new domain, the horseman our ideal.”

The ten-year-old boy had ample oppor-

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tunity to become acquainted with the waving grasses and flowers of the prairie, with the ground creatures, and with the birds of the air during ten hours of each day as, with hands above shoulders on the handles of the plow and with guiding lines crossed over his back, he directed the horses and plow about the field, trudging from sixteen to eighteen miles day after day through October and November. His days of chores had passed; this was a man's job.

The day when the Garland children were taken over the prairie to Osage to be outfitted for school was a gala day for them. When the little group returned home in the wagon that boasted two spring seats, there was not a prouder boy in all Mitchell County than Hamlin Garland, the possessor of high red-topped boots, a McGuffey reader, a Mitchell geography, a Ray's arithmetic, and a slate. The school, a mile to the southwest, was merely a square box of a house, painted white outside and a dull drab within, with two doors on the east side and three windows on each of three sides—"a barren temple of arts." Here Ham-

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lin Garland met Burton Babcock, his seat-mate, who soon became his chum.

The arrival of spring, heralded by "the mellow boom-boom-boom of the prairie cock" and "the wistful piping of the prairie lark," brought a return of Hamlin Garland's duties as teamster. This time he was in charge of a harrow for the field he had plowed the preceding October and November. For seventy days with his Uncle David, who had preceded them to Mitchell County, he had walked behind the plow on the new farm, with interludes of gathering hay from the wild meadows to the north and of threshing from the shock on the rented farm. The monotony of the wearisome task of dragging acre upon acre each day was broken by his interest in the changes in the landscape as the season progressed, in the activities of small animals on the sunny soil, and in the notes and flights of birds. He recalls the flocks of ducks that swept northward, pausing at sunset to feed in the fields of stubble. "They came," he writes, "in countless myriads and often when they settled to earth they covered acres of meadow like some prodigious cataract

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from the sky. When alarmed they rose with a sound like the rumbling of thunder." In formal flocks brant and geese followed. During perfect days of spring, robins, bluebirds, and kingbirds made their entrances; the gopher whistled and built its mounds of earth; the nesting plover called; and blackbirds clucked. The sand-hill crane, the herald of summer, came last. "His brazen, reverberating call will forever remain associated in my mind," says Hamlin Garland, "with mellow pulsating earth, springing grass, and cloudless glorious May-time skies. . . . As my team moved to and fro over the field, ground sparrows rose in countless thousands, flinging themselves against the sky like grains of wheat from out a sower's hand, and their chatter fell upon me like the voices of fairy sprites, invisible and multitudinous. Long, swift flocks of a bird we called 'the prairie-pigeon' swooped over the swells on sounding wing, winding so close to the ground, they seemed at times slender air-borne serpents, and always the brown lark whistled as if to cheer my lonely task."

As his father and he cleared the ground

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about the new home under construction, many rattle-snakes were killed, and prairie wolves lurked in the groves and swales. The house was a bleak, plain house of pine, unadorned without and within, yet a home by reason of his mother's brave and cheery presence. The prattle of Jessie's clear voice filled it with music.

In the schoolhouse on the plains Hamlin Garland developed a love for poetry through reading poems by Scott, Byron, Southey, Wordsworth, and other English poets and poems by Longfellow, Whittier, Bryant, and other American poets that were included in the McGuffey's readers used in the school. A milestone in his literary progress was the reading of *The Hoosier Schoolmaster* by Edward Eggleston, a chronicle of every day life, which revealed to him that there was as much interest for readers in tales of the Middle Border as in tales of knights and ladies, queens and kings, and dukes and duchesses of the old world. Hamlin Garland, later in life, acknowledged his indebtedness to Edward Eggleston for thus pointing the way to him. Jane Porter's *Scottish Chiefs*, *Ivanhoe* by Scott, Franklin's *Autobiography*,

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and the *Life of P. T. Barnum* intrigued him. Among the periodicals and papers known to the pioneers on the western prairies were Godey's *Ladies' Book*, *Peterson's Magazine*, the *Toledo Blade*, and the *New York Tribune*.

In winter sometimes the blizzards lasted two or three days. It was bitterly cold, often thirty degrees below zero, and the wind swept the snow along at thirty miles an hour. After such storms the children arrived at school, a half-mile distant, painfully aware of frosted fingers, toes, nose, and ears. The monotony of the long winter evenings was broken occasionally by a dance and the weekly meeting of the singing school for the young people, and by skating. The routine of daily duties in the spring and summer was interrupted for the boys by herding the cows that wandered off over the prairie to graze in the sheltered swales. The boys never shirked this late afternoon task and soon learned to ride the swift western ponies with the skill of the Comanches. Standing on the saddles they pretended they were circus riders, for circus day, always a gala day in the life of Hamlin Garland, stimulated the lad's imagi-

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nation. Sometimes on these wild rides over the plains he played the part of Wild Buck or Buckskin Joe in pursuit of Indians or buffalo. On the upland ridges they often came upon huge antlers, bleached and bare, in countless numbers that brought to their minds pictures of herds of elk and bison of the days when the tall Sioux were the only hunters. In the rocky unplowed ridges were the dens of the badger. Often on the sunny southward-sloping swells they came upon the mother fox with her young. In the hazel copse the prairie wolf slept. With his shotgun Hamlin Garland killed prairie chickens and ducks on the wing. On Sunday afternoons he and his sister Harriet gathered bouquets of pink sweet William, tiger lilies, and lady-slippers that grew wild in the meadows along Dry Run.

The haying season was welcomed with rapture by the small boys, but not by the mothers whose duties in the kitchen increased. The reaping on the Garland farm lasted about four weeks. The barley was followed by the wheat and that in turn by the oats. At the age of fourteen Hamlin Garland was promoted from

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bundle boy to binder on the corners, a job for a full-grown man. As soon as the stacking was completed, the dreaded and lonely task of plowing began. In October he turned to the task of corn husking, interrupted only by an occasional cold rain that offered him an opportunity to read or to play cards in the kitchen. The game of authors was a favorite pastime. It never occurred to the fourteen-year-old boy that he would ever claim among his acquaintances authors, whom he counted then as "singular, exalted beings found only in the East in splendid cities." Nor in 1874 did this plowboy dream that during the first quarter of the twentieth century his name would find a place in a deck of author cards.

During the early seventies a social organization known as the Patrons of Husbandry grew in popularity among the tillers of the soil. The Grange or place of meeting to which the numbers known as Grangers brought their families became the center of the limited social activities of the prairie folk. In winter the Burr Oak Grove Schoolhouse served as the Grange to which the Garland family went for oyster sup-

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pers followed by debates, songs, and the reading of essays; on the twelfth of June each year the Grangers met for a picnic by the Big Cedar River. This gathering of the Grangers was an inspiring sight to young Hamlin Garland as he watched the long line of spring wagons, top-buggies, carriages, bowery wagons, in which rode small groups of girls and boys, and other vehicles wind down the lanes to the main road and thence to the picnic grounds to hear the orators who awaited them. He says that nothing more picturesque, more delightful, and more helpful has ever risen out of American rural life. In his survey of social activities that he enjoyed on the prairies of the Middle Border he notes that the Lyceum replaced the singing school and the county fair which lasted three days each September grew to be an event second only to Fourth of July.

The five years of life on the prairie farm wrought many changes in Hamlin Garland's world. His first close contact with death came when his sister Harriet died during her early years at school. He was growing from boyhood to young manhood. The homesteads,

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softened more and more each year as the maples towered above them, gradually appeared less barren and ugly. Yet with all the signs of prosperity Hamlin Garland realized that "something sweet and splendid was dying out of the prairie. The whistling pigeons, the wailing plover, the migrating ducks and geese, the soaring cranes, the shadowy wolves, the wary foxes, all the untamed things were passing, vanishing with the blue-joint grass, the dainty wild rose, and the tiger lily's flaming torch. Settlement was complete." He had learned from the farm-hands—rough, hardy wanderers from the South, nomads who had followed the ripening wheat from Missouri northward—that cruelty and baseness existed in the world, that low-minded men are low-minded everywhere, that on such creatures "the beauty of nature has very little effect." These harvest-hands "were not the most profitable companions for boys of fifteen," writes Hamlin Garland. "They reached our neighborhood in July, arriving like a flight of alien unclean birds, and vanished into the north in September as mysteriously as they had appeared."

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Shortly after the death of Harriet Mr. Garland was appointed official grain buyer for the county. The family moved to Osage. A desire for the training offered at the Seminary whetted Hamlin Garland's ambition. He hired himself out as a harvester in order to earn sufficient money to enter the Seminary, a primitive institution, hardly more than a high school. Mingling with the young people at the Seminary on week days and at the village service on Sundays gave him a new outlook on life. In March 1877 the family moved back to the farm. But Seminary days did not end for this son of the Middle Border. He and Burton Babcock, his seat-mate and chum at the little country schoolhouse, returned to the Seminary after the autumn crops were in. For the three following years they lived together in a rented room near the school.

Meanwhile Mr. Garland, discouraged because of the failure of crops, decided to join once more the westward movement of settlers toward the land of the Dakotas, recently wrested from the control of Sitting Bull. Mrs. Garland, widely separated from the McClin-

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tocks, resigned herself to the idea of founding another new home. Hamlin Garland, with his diploma from the Seminary and without hope of going to college, was confronted with the question, "What am I to do?" In spite of the oratorical flights in his commencement address, *Going West*, he had no intention of joining the westward march to Ordway, Brown County, South Dakota, the future home of the Garland family. He had looked forward to employment as a teacher. With the sale of their homestead, however, the future took on a different aspect. In September, before the family left their prairie home, he set out alone to discover what the world held for him.

Since that day in 1880 Hamlin Garland has travelled far afield. His experiences have been many and varied. He was duly impressed by his first ride in a railway coach across the state line in what proved to be a discouraging and futile search for a position as teacher. Finally, inspired by the clamor for land that he heard wherever he went, and the sight of the deep, rich soil of this new border land, he concluded

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that his father had acted wisely in leaving his Iowa farm in order to share Uncle Sam's unclaimed land, and he joined the carpenters at work on his father's new farm to earn money for further adventure. After a fortnight he set out eastward. Unable to secure a position as teacher in Red Wing he set out to visit relatives. He had only three cents in his pocket when he arrived, but hearing of a school twenty miles distant he went forth once more, on foot this time, since he was too proud to tell his cousins of his penniless state. Footsore, rainsoaked, he finally curbed his stubborn pride and begged shelter for the night in the home of a farmer. The next day he returned to his cousin's home, explained his financial condition, and applied for a position as a farmhand. By December he had sufficient funds to go to Onalaska to visit the old coulee in which his father's sister, Grandfather McClintock, and Uncle William McClintock were still living. He found "the magic was gone from the hills and the glamour from the meadows." When his grandfather asked what he was planning to do, he replied, "I haven't any definite

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plans, except to travel. I want to see the world."

"To see the world!" the Adventist grandfather exclaimed. "As for me I wait for it to pass away. I watch daily for the coming of the Chariot."

After two months with his Aunt Susan in Onalaska he set out once more upon his fruitless round of seeking and holding a job. At last, half-starved and weak, he found employment as a carpenter in Rock River near Chicago. He writes, "My bearing became confident and easy. Money had straightened my back." He moved from his charity bed in the Y. M. C. A. and took a room in a decayed mansion surrounded by a big lawn. While Hamlin Garland was in Rock River Edwin Booth, the famous Shakespearean actor of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was announced as the opening attraction in the new Opera House. Booth's interpretation of Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, taught Garland in one hour much about this Shakespearean play and the beauty of the English language and inspired him with the ambition to read as Edwin Booth

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had read. For days, as he hammered and sawed, he murmured to himself the lines of the play hoping to keep always in his mind "the cadences of the great tragedian's matchless voice."

Edwin Booth's performance reminded Hamlin Garland so vividly of his father's stories about the elder Booth and Edwin Forrest of Boston that he decided to visit Boston and to explore the boyhood haunts of his father in New England. The twenty-two-year-old boy with his younger brother started for the East, planning to see Niagara Falls enroute and to spend the Fourth of July on Boston Common. Of Niagara Falls he writes, "As we crept nearer, the shuddering roar deepened, and our awe, our admiration, our patriotism deepened with it, and when at last we leaned against the rail and looked across the tossing spread of river swiftly sweeping to its fall, we held our breaths in wonder. It met our expectations.

"Of course we went below and spent two of our hard-earned dollars in order to be taken behind the falls. We were smothered with spray and forced to cling frenziedly to the

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hands of our guide. . . . No one could rob us of the glory of having adventured so far."

Of Massachusetts and the crossing of the border line he writes, "I had all the emotions of a pilgrim entering upon some storied oriental vale. Massachusetts to me meant Whittier and Hawthorne and Wendell Phillips and Daniel Webster. It was the cradle of our liberty, the home of literature, the province of art—and it contained Boston! . . . The names of the stations rang in our ears like bells, Lexington, Concord, Cambridge, Charlestown, and—at last Boston!"

After visiting places of literary and historic interest in and about Boston, the two brothers set out for Portland and Bethel, the towns their father had described. At Lock Mills they met two of their father's playmates, old men, "gnarled and knotted by their battle with the rocks and barren hillsides." One of the objectives in their two thousand mile journey was Mount Washington.¹ Their climb to the top

¹ Read Hamlin Garland's description of their expedition up and down Mount Washington. *A Son of the Middle Border*, pages 282-286.

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was rewarded by a view of the sunrise. Their hazardous slide down the western slope of the mountain through the mist of the clouds to the valley below was a daring feat that only youth would attempt. "Tramping along exquisite winding roads, loitering by sunny ripples, or dreaming in the shadow of magnificent elms," the brothers finally reached the Connecticut River. Here they boarded a train for a ride of fifty or sixty miles. Almost penniless, they took jobs harvesting oats, earning seven dollars apiece with which to continue their journey to Greenfield, Massachusetts. Here Hamlin Garland found employment with a carpenter who invited both brothers to live in his home. After they had accumulated thirty dollars, they went forth to explore the wonders of New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington.

In the autumn they left Washington on the Chicago Express after months of thrilling, difficult, and frequently discouraging experiences. Leaving his brother in Ohio, Franklin journeyed home alone. Hamlin worked once more at the carpenter's trade until he was offered a

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position in a district school in Grundy County. At the close of a winter of teaching he answered the call of "the sunset regions."

He spent a night in Chicago, a day in Neshonoc with his Uncle Richard, and then joined the throngs of Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, Scotchmen, Englishmen, and Russians—land-seekers bound for Dakota. He took up a claim near Ordway. During a winter and a summer in Dakota, he was torn by the lure of the mysterious beauty of the plains and a desire to study literature and oratory in Boston. His brother, who had sold his claim and had gone to Chicago, sent confident and cheerful letters of his success as a bookkeeper. Finally Hamlin made his decision. He mortgaged his claim for two hundred dollars and started for the haunts of Emerson, Longfellow, and Hawthorne. Once more he left the land of the sunset for the land of the sunrise stopping only for a brief visit with Franklin in Chicago.

In Boston he selected a small room in a sunless nook next door to the Public Library. His time was devoted to the study of historical monuments of the city, which he sought out

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on foot, to reading in the Young Men's Union or in the Public Library, to lectures open free of charge to members of the Union, a group of intellectual mendicants, and to plays at the old Museum, where for thirty-five cents he purchased standing room in the first balcony for Edwin Booth's performances of Hamlet, Othello, Lear, Petruchio, Sir Giles Overreach, Macbeth, Iago, and Richelieu. Because the Boston University classes did not appeal to him, the Harvard lectures were financially inaccessible, and a conference with a teacher of "Expression" was very unsatisfactory, Hamlin Garland followed the only course open to him. He spent fourteen hours a day reading the works of English and German poets and philosophers in the Library, the Union, or in his sunless, cold room, attempting to prolong his stay in Boston by keeping his expenses within five dollars per week.

In spite of constant hunger, cold, and threadbare clothes, the knowledge that he was living near such men as William Dean Howells, Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Greenleaf Whittier, Edwin Booth, and James Russell Lowell,

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whose goings and comings he carefully noted in the daily papers, inspired him with the ambition to succeed. "I won't be beaten, I will not surrender," he reiterated to himself. His interest in great personalities was strong within him thus early in life and is reflected throughout his autobiographical sketches of his experiences. The symphony concerts, the Lowell Institute Lectures, the Atlantic Monthly, distinctive institutions of Boston, meant much to him, yet he had little contact with them. Though conscious that his money was dwindling and that he was growing weaker and paler each day, friendless and alone in the great city, he continued his studies and made the most of the opportunities for free lectures by such men as Minot Savage, Edward Everett Hale, George William Curtis, Henry Ward Beecher, and Frederick Douglass.

One night after hearing a lecture by Professor Brown, the principal of a well-known school of oratory, he ventured to the platform to express his interest in certain quotations from a book by Darwin he had been reading. His studies had borne fruit. Professor Brown,

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delighted by his comments, invited him to his office for a conference the next morning. He was asked to enroll in the school with the understanding that he pay the tuition as he could. His lonely life in Boston had come to an end. After a week had passed, Professor Brown asked him to assist in reading the proof-sheets of a book he had written. In a few days the Professor announced that Garland's critical comments on the manuscript would more than pay for his tuition.

In April through his friend Mr. Bashford, who out on the prairies had encouraged him to go East to study, Hamlin Garland received an introduction to Dr. Cross. This proved to be a boon to him. Dr. Cross, a kindly man of sixty years, and his wife, a "wholesome, hearty soul," were the friends he needed. They urged him, almost commanded him, to dine with them often. In later years he learned that the friendly doctor was genuinely alarmed about this young man, who had the pallor of one who had been living in a cellar.

Finally Hamlin Garland faced the necessity of giving up his studies. His announcement of

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his intention to leave the school to go back to shingling was met with a chuckle from Professor Brown, who could not reconcile the idea of a man who knew Darwin, Whitman, and Browning nailing shingles on a roof. Although he taunted his protege with the question, "Well, when are you going back to shingling?" he realized the seriousness of the situation, and appointed Hamlin Garland an Instructor of Literature for the summer term. About the same time Dr. Cross asked him to spend the interim of his wife's absence in his home. Upon Mrs. Cross's return the attic room became his on condition that Dr. Cross would permit him to pay at least the cost of his board. "This noble invitation," writes Mr. Garland, "translated me from my dark, cold, cramped den (with its night-guard of redoubtable cockroaches) into the light and air of a comfortable suburban home. It took me back to the sky and the birds and the grass—and Irish Mary, the cook, put red blood into my veins. In my sabbath walks along the beautiful country roads, I heard again the song of the cat bird and the trill of the bobolink. For the first time

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in months I slept in freedom from hunger, in security of the morrow."

One of his students made it possible for him to give a course of lectures in her home to a group of her friends, men and women of prominence in the cultural life of Boston. Among them was Charles E. Hurd, literary editor of the *Transcript*, who urged Garland to call at his office. On the homeward drive after his first lecture, a paper on Edwin Booth's interpretation of Shakespeare, Dr. Cross said very solemnly, "You have no need to fear the future."

Of what has that future consisted? At the beginning his critical articles and short poems were published in the *Transcript* under the influence of Mr. Hurd. His first writing of significance, an article depicting an Iowa corn-husking scene entitled "The Western Corn-Husking," revealed the painful as well as the pleasant truth about life on the prairie and reflected a quality of realism characteristic of Hamlin Garland's early writings. This bit of writing was suggested to him by the sound of

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a man shoveling coal in an alley below his window, reminding him of the ringing scrape the farm shovel made when he had scooped a load of corn from wagon box to crib. The article was accepted at once by the *New American Magazine* with a request for others. About the same time *Harper's Weekly* accepted a long poem of the prairie, for which he received twenty-five dollars. With this first money from magazine writing he purchased material for his mother's first silk dress and *Memoirs of General Grant* for his father. Thus he celebrated his entrance into literature.

Though Boston offered him all that he craved—music, art, literature—he soon discovered the East did not inspire him to write. Each season brought forth memories of the broad fields of Iowa and the level plains of Dakota. Finally, at the age of twenty-seven years, he returned to the West for a visit. As he went from place to place, he became aware of the futility of a woman's life on a farm and wondered why the stern facts of such life, the dullness of the houses, the lack of charm and color in the lives of the people had not found a place in

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American literature as it had in Russian and English fiction. Suddenly aware that new themes untouched by New England writers were available in this wide life of the prairies, which he knew so well, something deep and resonant vibrated within his brain. He looked out upon the commonplace landscape of the plains, and he was aroused by a new power within him. He acknowledged the stir of inspiration as he crossed the Mississippi at Dubuque: "The coaches lay under the western bluffs, but away to the south the valley ran, walled with royal purple, and directly across the flood, a beach of sand flamed under the sunset light as if it were a bed of pure untarnished gold. Behind this an island rose, covered with noble trees which suggested all the romance of the immemorial river. The red-man's canoe, the explorer's batteau, the hunter's lodge, the emigrant's cabin, all stood related to that inspiring vista. For the first time in my life I longed to put this noble stream into verse." After six years' absence, it seemed that every house he visited around Osage "had its individual message of sordid

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struggle and half-hidden despair." To him it seemed that "all the gilding of farm life melted away. . . . Nature was as beautiful as ever. The soaring sky was filled with shining clouds, the tinkle of the bobolink's fairy bells rose from the meadow, a mystical sheen was on the odorous grass and waving grain, but no splendor of cloud, no grace of sunset could conceal the poverty of these people; on the contrary they brought out, with a more intolerable poignancy, the gracelessness of these homes, and the sordid quality of the mechanical daily routine of these lives." Though he did not realize it at the time, Hamlin Garland was finding his theme in the essential tragedy and hopelessness of the barren, empty, and laborious life on the plain.

When he reached Ordway, he noted with sadness many changes in his parents, who had aged during his absence of three years. The serene, sweet, but determined manner of his young sister Jessie swayed the household. "For all his military bluster," writes Hamlin Garland, "the old soldier was entirely subject to her." Once more this son of the Middle Border

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took his place on the stack, for the harvest was just beginning. During the conversations about the past he had with his parents at the close of each day's labors he found the theme of his first story. It was a simple tale which his mother told of an old woman they had known. "That is too good to lose. I'm going to write it out." Then to amuse his mother he added, "Why, that's worth seventy-five dollars to me. I'll go halves with you." He did; the story was started at once and finished in Boston.

In September he returned to his attic room in Jamaica Plain with a desire to put into fiction his newly-born conception of the Border. Before he entered upon his duties as teacher he wrote several short stories which he sent forth to first-class periodicals, undaunted by possible disappointment and rejection. The same autumn he created something of a sensation by his initial speech before the Anti-Poverty Society in the old Horticultural Hall on Tremont Street. His friend Mr. Chamberlin, the Listener of the *Transcript*, filled his column with a long review of the talk by this penniless stu-

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dent and struggling writer. Thus in a single season he launched forth on his double career of writer and lecturer. In addition to these demands and those of teaching he was preparing his brother, Franklin, who had joined him in Boston, for the stage. His contacts with great personalities contributed new interests to his rapidly expanding horizon. Among his early contacts with literary people were Mr. Hurd and Mr. Chamberlin of the *Transcript*, William Dean Howells, Walt Whitman, Alice Brown, Mary E. Wilkins, Stephen Crane, and among the stage folk Edwin Booth, and James and Katherine Herne, with whom his brother was associated.

He was encouraged by the acceptance of his accounts of Middle Border life in prose and poetry by *Harper's Weekly*, *Harpers*, *Youth's Companion*, *New American Magazine*, the *Century*, and the *Arena*. In 1891 he collected six sketches in one volume under the title *Main Travelled Roads*. The joy of preparing his first volume was overshadowed by the sudden death of his sister Jessie and the thought of his sorrowing parents "alone on the bleak plain seven-

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teen hundred miles from both their sons." His dedication, bitter with revolt, reflects the spirit of a reformer attempting to give a realistic picture of life on the western farms: "To my father and mother whose half-century of pilgrimage on the main travelled road of life has brought them only pain and weariness, these stories are dedicated by a son to whom every day brings a deepening sense of his parents' silent heroism." The volume brought forth in editorials and criticisms attempts to prove that this portrayal of the Middle Border by an eastern author was utterly false. Such criticism stimulated controversy in which Hamlin Garland, whose replies were challenges, was prevented from going too far by the friendly advice of those whose judgment he revered. He heeded the admonition not to preach but to exemplify, not to let his stories degenerate into tracts, and not to leave beauty out of his pictures. What delighted him most was to be welcomed into the circle of American realists by the applause of such writers as Edward Everett Hale, Mary E. Wilkins, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Charles Dudley Warner, and Ed-

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mund Clarence Stedman. This first volume of 1891 was followed the next year by *Prairie Folk* and in 1910 by *Other Main Travelled Roads*. In these stories he presents life "not as the summer boarder sees it, but as the farmer endures it."

Frequently young readers do not realize what experiences, studies, travel, observation and thought form the background of the stories they enjoy. Hamlin Garland traveled from coast to coast, from New Mexico to Alaska in order to verify youthful impressions of the frontiersman for his stories of the prairies and the plains, and to observe Indians,¹ mountaineers, and miners for his mountain stories. By way of preparation for his biography of Ulysses S. Grant he planned trips which filled a large part of 1896. He writes in *A Daughter of the Middle Border*: "Beginning at Georgetown, Ohio, where I found several of Grant's boyhood playmates, I visited Ripley, where he went to school, and then at the Academy at West Point I spent several days examining the

¹ Read "The Human Side of the Red Man" by Hamlin Garland, *Current Literature*, December 2, 1927.

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records. In addition I went to each of the barracks at which young Grant had been stationed. Saketts Harbor, Detroit, and St. Louis yielded their traditions. A month in Mexico enabled me to trace out on foot not only the battle grounds of Monterey, but that of Vera Cruz, Puebla, and Molina del Rey." He interviewed old neighbors in Springfield and Galena. In pursuit of Grant's classmates Hamlin Garland took long journeys. In all he traveled nearly thirty thousand miles in more than half the states of the Union seeking out places and people known to Grant. In the autumn of 1897 he took lodgings in Washington to study Grant's administration with the new Congressional Library as his workshop. Throughout the winter seven hours each day he "sat in a special room turning pages of musty books and yellowed newspapers or dictating to a stenographer the story of the Reconstruction Period as it unfolded."

During this period in Washington one of his distinguished hosts was Theodore Roosevelt, then Assistant Secretary of the Navy, who invited him to his home many times for lunch or dinner. Others who entertained him were

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John Hay, Senator Lodge, Major Powell, and Edward Eggleston, the author of *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*, a book that had served to point the way toward Hamlin Garland's career as an interpreter of the Middle Border. Theodore Roosevelt was intensely interested in Hamlin Garland's plans for a trip into the Yukon, and once remarked, "By George, I wish I could go with you." Then, writes Hamlin Garland, his tone changed. "We are in for trouble with Spain and I must be on the job."

In his diary is this entry: "My Grant life is now so nearly complete that I feel free to begin a work which I have long meditated. I began to dictate, today, the story of my life as boy and man in the West. In view of my approaching perilous trip into the North I want to leave a fairly accurate chronicle of what I saw and what I did on the Middle Border." This was the beginning of *A Son of the Middle Border*, which was not ready for publication until 1917. The Grant life was not finished until the spring of 1898. He writes, "As spring came on and the end of my history of Grant drew near, my longing for the open air, the

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forest, and the trail, made proof-reading a punishment. My eyes (weary of newspaper files and manuscripts) are filled with mountain pictures. Visioning my plunge into the wilderness with keenest longing, I collected a kit of cooking utensils, a sleeping bag and some pack saddles . . . together with all information concerning British Columbia and the proper time for hitting the long trail." When the biography of Ulysses Grant was released for the final printing, after two years of travel and interviews, of research studies, of writing, of revision and proof-reading, he announced to McClures, "This is the end of my historical writing. I'm going back to my fiction of the Middle Border."

For nineteen years Hamlin Garland continued to record his life as a boy and a man on the plains and prairies of the Middle Border, a brief survey of which you have just read in these introductory pages to *The Long Trail*. During those nineteen years he was not living in the past only, but was making the most of opportunities each year offered to extend his

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knowledge of life. In his diary are accounts of his adventures among the Indians in the western mountains, of his perilous journey to the Yukon region, and of the remodeling of the Garland homestead in West Salem, Wisconsin, which had been purchased in 1893 that his mother might be released from the rigors of the western frontier during the last years of her life. In the same year Hamlin Garland had established himself as an author in Chicago, where he later founded the Cliff Dwellers' Club, and became a leader in the æsthetic life of the city. A sojourn in London satisfied his desire to meet literary men of prominence in England. After 1899, the date of his marriage to Miss Zulime Taft, a sculptress and sister of the great American sculptor Lorado Taft, his wife shared his adventures in the sunset land of plains, prairies, and mountains. His writing was interrupted by frequent lecture trips and journeys to New York publishers. After the death of his mother he spent a winter in New York, and then returned to the Garland homestead. His two daughters brought cheer to the old soldier and pioneer, their

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grandfather, whom they remembered in later years as "the serene, white-haired veteran of many battles who taught them to revere the banner he so passionately adored." As time progressed a feeling of restlessness grew. Hamlin Garland longed for the literary companionship that Chicago did not provide. He writes, "I looked away to New York for stimulus. . . . There was nothing to do in West Salem but write. . . . In Chicago I was a perversity, a man of mis-directed energy. In New York I was at least respected as a writer. In short New York allured me as London allures the writers of England, and as Paris attracts artists of Europe. It was my literary capital. . . . Only as I neared the publishing centers did I feel the slightest confidence in the future."

The joys, the sorrows, the hopes, the discouragements, and the fruits of perseverance during the years from 1893 to 1914 are reflected in his second autobiographical volume, *A Daughter of the Middle Border*. In it he recounts his efforts to find a publisher for *A Son of the Middle Border* in serial form. "All through the autumn I ground away at my story

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of the Middle Border, conscious of the fact that—in a commercial sense—I was wasting my time, for several of my editorial friends had assured me of that fact; but each morning as I climbed to my study I forgot my drab surroundings. Closing the door of the bitter present and turning my back on the stormy future I relived my audacious youth and dreamed of the brave days of old.” In January 1914 it was accepted by Mark Sullivan of *Colliers*. “My task was clearly outlined,” he writes. “For the seventh time I set to work revising *A Son of the Middle Border*, preparing it for serial publication.” The first installment appeared in March of that year. It was read with keen interest by his father, who could not understand why the editor of a great periodical should be interested in a record of the migrations and failures of the McClintocks and Garlands. With mingling emotions, half-humorous and half-resentful, he asked his son, “Aren’t you a little hard on me?”

Hamlin Garland’s reply was, “I don’t think so, Father. You must admit you were a stern disciplinarian in those days.”

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"Well, maybe I was—but I didn't realize it," was the response.

A few months later Richard Garland, a soldier of the Union, mustered out, to join once more his wife, Isabel McClintock. His son writes thus of him in the closing paragraphs of his volume *A Daughter of the Middle Border*. "His snowy hair and beard, his fair skin and shapely features, as well as a certain firm sweetness in the line of his lips raised him to a grave dignity which made me proud of him. Representing an era in American settlement as he did I rejoiced that nothing but the noblest lines of his epic career were written on his face.

"This is my consolation. His last days were spent in calm content with his granddaughters to delight and comfort him. In their young lives his spirit is going forward. They remember and love him as the serene, white-haired veteran of many battles who taught them to revere the banner he so passionately adored."

In *Back-Trailers from the Middle Border* the lure of the East is answered by the removal of the Garland family from their home in Chicago to another in New York City. The volume

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is a record of Hamlin Garland's literary activities among literary friends, of his interest in his young daughters as they grew to young womanhood, of Camp Neshonoc, their mountain lodge in Rip Van Winkle's land among the Catskills, of their journeys abroad, and of the joy of his daughters in meeting their favorite authors. In this connection Hamlin Garland has provided many very delightfully intimate pictures of England's authors in their homes as the Garlands saw them when entertained at tea or dinner by Rudyard Kipling, John Masefield, Maurice Hewlett, Joseph Conrad, Conan Doyle, A. A. Milne, John Galsworthy, Bernard Shaw, Sir James Barrie, and Thomas Hardy.

Hamlin Garland's interest in great personalities is reflected further in a series of books—*Roadside Meetings*, *Companions on the Trail*, and *My Friendly Contemporaries*—based upon his literary log, which has filled volume after volume of diaries. The last of this series, published in 1932, is based on ten volumes of his diaries running from 1913 to 1923. At the end of *My Friendly Contemporaries* is this note:

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“Ten more volumes of my diaries remain to be edited, and to those interested I am moved to say, ‘Wind and weather permitting, another log-book will some time be added to the set.’” These books provide personal glimpses of men and women whose acquaintance Hamlin Garland says he has enjoyed and whose books, plays, and pictures were of interest to him. Turn to them for anecdotes and characterizations of your favorite authors who are and have been Hamlin Garland’s contemporaries.

The last chapters of *Back-Trailers from the Middle Border* deal with the careers of his daughters. Mary Isabel after one short season as a member of a theatrical company decided she had had all she wanted “of the smells and noises behind the footlights” and was ready to return once more with her father to the platform and to assist in the preparation of his manuscripts. Constance, possessing a “gift for drawing, a talent for music, and a genius for friendship,” declared her desire to be a painter and an illustrator. Her work won for her a contract from her father’s publisher to illustrate *Trail-Makers of the Middle Border*, a preface

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or prelude for the Middle Border series dealing with the early Wisconsin life of the older Garlands and McClintocks. Of his daughters' contributions to his work Hamlin Garland writes: "Just as Mary Isabel by her lovely face and voice had lightened my platform program, so now my younger daughter came to my aid with her girlish imagination and skilled hand. The poetry and romance of early Wisconsin commingled in her concept. Her gay little stage coaches, her gracious hills and commodious park-like valleys, her ladies in hoop-skirts looking at campfires, were entirely in keeping with my happy memories which my father and mother so often tried to express. I sent the book forth with a confidence which I could not have achieved without Constance's aid." Thus life continued in the New York apartment, in Camp Neshonoc, and later, during and after the summer of 1925, in Gray Ledge, a twelve-room house "occupying a ledge of gray rock almost at the top of Onteora Mountain, with a wide porch which overlooked a valley as lovely as any of those which Inness made famous." In his diary of August 14 is the

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following item: "I was up and at my desk this morning at dawn, but the shining rivers of mist winding along the valley below (a thousand feet below), and the sun coming up over the Hendrick Hudson Peaks to the left made a picture too distracting to permit immediate concentration on my work. The entire outlook is superb, more beautiful than I had ever hoped to command. Our porch is said to be nearly three thousand feet above the sea."

Back-Trailers from the Middle Border approaches its close with an account of the marriages of the Garland daughters,—Mary Isabel's marriage to Hardesty Johnston, a young American singer whom she had met during the second summer in London, and later Constance's marriage to Joseph Wesley Harper, a grandson of one of the founders of Harper and Brothers. These great-granddaughters of transplanted New Englanders and daughters of a son and a daughter of the Middle Border opened homes of their own in California—beyond the plains, beyond the prairies, beyond the land of the Middle Border, and beyond the mountains. With a reminiscent chapter, "An-

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cestral Fires," stimulated by a visit with his wife to the Wayside Inn, the old post road tavern in Massachusetts that had inspired Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, Hamlin Garland brought the fourth and last of his Middle Border books to an end, thus closing a cycle in the history of his family in the East, the place from which his father began his western march. During a period of fifteen years he had described "the wide arc from 1840 to 1928, the better part of a century in time, and of immeasurable extent when expressed in social betterment and material invention." He writes, "My own life is not yet a long life, but I have seen more of change in certain directions than all the men from Julius Caesar to Abraham Lincoln. I have seen the reaping hook develop into the combined reaper and thresher, the ox-team give way to the automobile, the telegraph to the radio, and the balloon to the flying ship. I have witnessed the installation of electric light, the coming of concrete highways, and the establishment of air-mail. Television is certain to arrive tomorrow.

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"Sometimes as I project myself back into Wisconsin, when my father drove an ox-team along the sandy roads of Green's Coulee, while my mother molded candles, carded wool and spun yarn for my clothing, I am an octogenarian dreaming in the sunset. Measured by these changes, ages have rolled by and limitless fields of thought have developed since I read my primer beside the kitchen stove. I wonder if any new forms of life my children will experience can match with those I have witnessed and chronicled. Will their lives be as representative of their age as my mother's was of hers? Will they be any happier in the possession of the television screen than I have been in the revelations of the radio?"

In this as in the majority of his writings Hamlin Garland, literary historian of pioneers of the lands of the Middle Border and chronicler of his contemporaries, has combined interests of the past and the present with hopes for the future, his inherent yearning for the wilderness and his desire for human companionship. In the introductory paragraph of the chapter "Ancestral Firesides" Hamlin Garland

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has provided in a few words an excellent characterization of himself: "As I sit here in my Onteora home and look back over the meandering footprints of my progress, I perceive that my course has been the result of two entirely diverse tendencies—one toward centers of human activity, toward books, pictures and music, the other toward the wilderness and Western exploration. I will not go so far as to say that these two natures have struggled for supremacy, but that they have been distinct enough and powerful enough to keep me shuttling to and fro between the city and the wilderness camp is not to be denied."

THE LONG TRAIL

I

LEAVING HOME

ONE day in early April, 1898, Jack Henderson, a boy living in a small Minnesota town, startled his mother by saying, "Mother, I've just had a letter from George May, and we're going to the Klondike."

Mrs. Henderson was ironing in the kitchen at the moment, and though she was disturbed by her son's abrupt declaration, she put her iron carefully away before she made reply.

"I'm glad you let me know beforehand. When do you start?"

Jack felt the gentle sarcasm in her question, but stoutly answered, "Right off. We've decided to go in by way of the Overland route,

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and we want to be on the Frazer and all ready to hit the trail as soon as the grass will feed our horses."

She took her spectacles down from her hair and adjusted them so that she could study his face. "Who did you say was going with you?"

"George May. He says he'll meet me in St. Paul any time I say, and I'm going to get ready and pull out—if you'll let me—to-morrow or next day."

To conceal her pain, Mrs. Henderson took up another flat-iron and resumed her work. "I'll have to think about it, Jack, and I guess you'd better think about it, too."

"I have thought about it—and my mind is made up."

This was quite true. Like many another lad of the West he had long been secretly aflame with the gold-fever. For months he had pored over everything which the newspapers brought to him concerning the returning miners and their burdens of gold. He and his chums had talked and written of nothing else during the winter, and now that the

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spring sun was warm on the earth and the grass was getting a faint tinge of green, his longing had broken into open resolution.

Mrs. Henderson worked away in silence, while Jack waited in great anxiety to know how decided her opposition was to be. She was a widow and he was her only son, and some part of her need of his daily presence he understood. He argued, more softly, "It's the thing to do, mother. I'm sure to win. I'm strong. I've got nearly four hundred dollars saved up and you won't have to lend me a cent. I'm going Overland because it's the cheapest way and because the papers say it's going to be the greatest rush since 'forty-nine."

In truth, Mrs. Henderson was not entirely taken by surprise in this matter. She had seen him bending over maps of the British Northwest and had heard bits of his hushed, excited talk with his fellows. "How like his father he is!" she thought, as she looked into his flushed face.

It was, indeed, this prophecy of the press which had decided the boy upon his trail.

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His father had trod the Overland trail of 'forty-nine (the one epic experience of his life), and had talked of it to his family till Jack knew it all by heart, and longed to taste the joys of the wilderness for himself. The blood of his adventurous sire was warm in his heart and shining in his eyes as he pleaded with his mother for her consent.

She did not bluntly refuse, but tried to dissuade him. "It is such a risk—and then, I need you here, Jack."

They were poor, but by no means in want, for Mr. Henderson had left them a small farm and this cottage on the edge of the village of Cedarbank. They were, indeed, very comfortable, though Mrs. Henderson was still obliged to work hard, and every penny had to be carefully weighed before it could be spent.

Jack used all this in his argument. "I want to see you having an easier time," he went on to say. "I want to bring back a lot of money and build you a new house and take you to see the world. I'll do it, too! I'm one of the lucky kind."

After trying her best to persuade him from

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his purpose, Mrs. Henderson called in Squire Ash to aid her in stating her case.

Jack, square-chinned and sturdy, faced them both with exalted resolution. "I can take care of myself," he retorted to the Squire. "A fellow who can earn a hundred dollars every year and go to school besides isn't going to fall down on a trip of this kind."

"That's just it," cried Alice, his sister. "You ought to keep on at school. Why don't you wait till after you graduate, anyway?"

"That would be too late. We've got to get in right now. Another year and all the mines will be gobbled up."

"The money you'll spend going to Klondike would send you to college for a year," Alice persisted.

The Squire added, gravely: "And besides, you're needed here, my boy. Your mother will miss you sadly."

All through the argument Jack remained unshaken. "I'm going," he repeated again.

The Squire rose, with a look of sympathy at Mrs. Henderson, and remarked, in final warn-

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ing: "Think it over very carefully, Jack, it's a long way to the gold-fields—and come to see me before you go."

Jack did not reply to this, but after the Squire had gone out turned again to his mother and passionately said, "You know there's no chance for a fellow in this little town. I've *got* to get out sooner or later. What is there for me to do but saw wood, or clerk, or work in the garden? All the fellows are going."

Mrs. Henderson saw the force of this. All the bright sons of the village left for the city or the mountains west, as soon as they were of age; it was only a question of another year or two before her own ambitious first-born would be gone. Perhaps it would be as well to let him go now. Only this was such a perilous enterprise!

He went on to set forth how much more certain his chances were than she had imagined. "Just think! wages are a dollar an hour up there! I can earn ten times as much as I can here. Even in winter they work underground."

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"But living is higher," Alice shrewdly put in.

"No matter. If I don't strike it rich right off I can earn a good living and enough to get back on and have the fun of the trip besides. Please let me go, mother. I don't want to go without your consent—but I've got to do something."

In the end Mrs. Henderson gave way. She knew that he had thoughts of enlisting in the army, and she preferred to see him go north rather than south. "It's healthy up there, anyway," she said to her daughter.

"Yes, let him go," advised Alice. "He'll be back in less than three months, well satisfied to stay where he can get hot apple-pie once in a while."

That night Jack wrote a most excited note to his friend George May, whose parents had moved to St. Paul, telling him to expect him on the evening train next day. "Have Owen come over too, and we'll meet at your house and make up an outfit: we want to be moving. They say we can depend on grass by the middle of April. Hurrah, for the trail!"

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There was little sleep for him that night, for his mind was busy with calculations and outfittings. He turned over to his mother a flock of sheep which he owned, and the money for these, together with what he already had in the bank, he thought would carry him to the mines. "Once I strike the diggings I can find work," he confidently ended.

The hour of parting came all too quickly for Mrs. Henderson, but to Jack the day dragged. He was up before daylight, and all packed and ready, needing only to get into the bank to be fully prepared for the journey.

His mother tried hard not to show her grief and foreboding, and when at last he came to say, "Well, mother, it's time to go," she put her arms about his neck and cried a little, then sadly said, "I can't bear to go to the train with you, Jack, it wouldn't do any good. All I want to say is don't go into any unnecessary danger, and be careful of your companions, and don't let anybody lead you to drink—promise me this, won't you?"

"I promise," he answered, and his voice

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trembled a little as he looked into the dear face he was leaving behind.

"I'm glad George May is going with you. He's a good, steady boy. And I'm sure Ole Hansen, if you find him, will be of use to you. Write often, for I'll be very anxious, you know."

"Don't you worry about me. I'll take care of myself. Yes, I'll write, but of course it will take a long time for my letters to reach you. So don't get nervous if they don't come often. I'll spend all day to-morrow in St. Paul, and pull out on the evening train. Owen Gilbert is going along."

"I'm glad you'll have two such fine companions. Good-bye!" And she turned away, not wishing him to see her tears again.

Alice, less deeply concerned, went with him to the station to witness his distinguished departure. A dozen or more of his schoolmates were present to "see the last of him," as one wag put it, and there was great confusion of hands and tongues as they all tried to wish him luck at the same time. Jack was very popular among them and they were sincerely

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sorry to see him start on this perilous trip towards the north pole. The girls thought him very brave, and the boys (some of them) said, "I wish I were going too."

In the glow of all this envy and admiration Jack lost the depression which his mother's sad face had produced in his heart, and when the train drew in he stepped aboard, smiling with proud elation. He felt sorry for the fellows who were forced to stay in that dull town, and he waved his hat in farewell salute, shouting gayly, "Here goes for the Arctic Circle."

"Remember my string of nuggets!" cried Alice, and she too smiled as he held up his hands to show how long the necklace should be.

II

THE GRUB-STAKE

ST. PAUL was a dark mountain glimmering with lights as Jack came into it at dusk, and the Union Station was swarming with other gold-seekers, some of them quite as young and inexperienced as himself. Bags, bundles, saddles, picks, and even shovels were being borne about by men in corduroy. The whole building was restless as an ant-heap and as clamorous as a foundry.

Jack was amazed and a good deal daunted by the noise, and bewildered by the confusion, and was very glad indeed when Owen darted out of the crowd and caught him by the arm. "Hello, Klondiker!" shouted he. "Can't you see a feller?"

Owen Gilbert was a plump young fellow of about Jack's age who was attending

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a school in Minneapolis and accustomed to crowds. To him Jack turned with relief. "I'm glad to see you, Owen. Where's George?"

"There he is, over by the other gate. He missed you."

In a few moments the three boys, all in high excitement, took a car for George's home, and as soon as they were seated Jack turned to George and asked: "Well, when do we start?"

George's face fell, and Owen looked uneasy. Jack's voice rose in astonishment and dismay. "You're going, aren't you?"

Owen answered, "I can't."

"Why not?"

"Well, my mother wouldn't hear to it for a minute. She says I've got to go on with my studies. Father says so, too."

George May had an equally good reason for not going, and for the remainder of the ride Jack was in very sad mood. He had received a severe blow at the very outset of his mining career. To go on without these good friends was at the moment not to be thought of, and

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he reproached them bitterly for deserting him. He used every argument he could command to induce them to renew their allegiance to his plan, but they sadly admitted defeat. They had not the money necessary, and their parents would not assist them in such a perilous undertaking. They had talked of it just as thousands of others had done, but at the moment of decision their courage had given way. They dared not go in opposition to the wishes of their elders.

"We just ache to hit the trail with you, Jack, but we can't do it now, that's the fact."

Jack was of tougher fibre, and gradually he recovered from his disappointment. "Well, you can play the softy if you want to," said he, "but I'm going just the same. I don't talk just to hear myself talk." They were in George's room and he could speak freely. He began to boast. "What I plan I carry out. You see this map?" He spread out a map of the British Northwest. "See that country marked unexplored? That's where I'm going. See that little crook in the Thompson River? Well, I'm going to start there

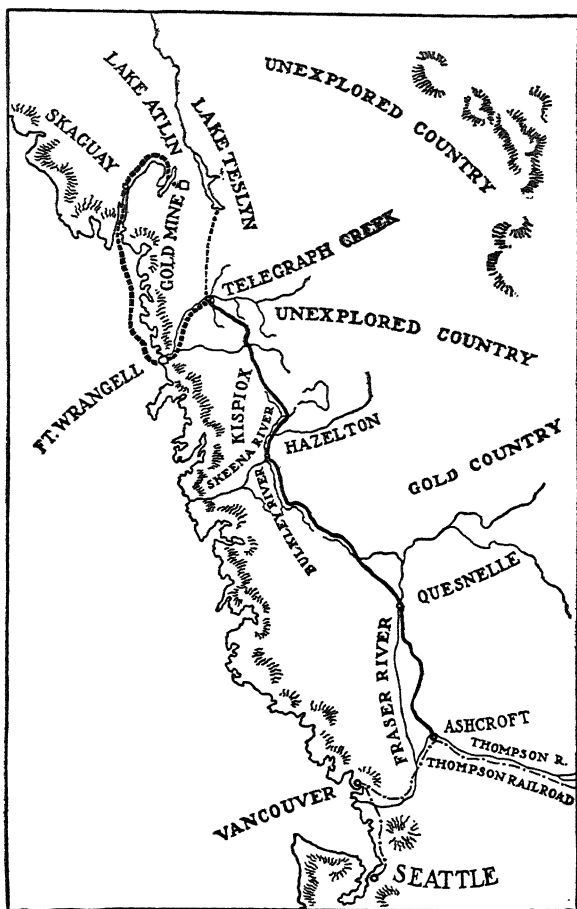
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on April 15th, and I'm going right along here between these two ranges of mountains to Glenora. 'Then I'm going to go from Glenora to Teslin Lake—just the way I planned.' He traced the line. "When I reach the Hotalinqua I'm going to sell my horses and build a raft and float down the river, panning the sand-bars till I strike it. If I don't find something mighty good I'm going to keep right on down to the Klondike."

These were bold words, but even as he spoke, and while the other boys listened, breathlessly, Jack's heart thumped very strangely. He had a sudden vision of himself crawling like a minute insect through that mighty wilderness, and a feeling of awe, of fear, for the first time swept over him. He was taking chances, after all!

However, he put this feeling aside and resumed his harangue with confident air.

His two friends nearly wept with chagrin as they went about with him next day while he completed his preparations for the journey. They were at his elbow as he bought a rifle,



MAP OF THE TRAIL

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a sleeping-bag, a water-proof sack for his clothing; and every purchase strengthened him in his purpose at the same time that it shamed his companions.

They went with him to the train late in the afternoon, and as they were all seated in the tourist-car, in which he had secured a berth, Owen pulled out a roll of bills and said, in an off-hand way: "See here, son, we can't go with you, but we don't think you've got money enough, and we would like to have a stake in your venture. Here are four hundred dollars that we've saved up, and we want to grub-stake you. We want an interest in what you find. What do you say to that?"

Jack was smitten dumb by this offer, for his small purse had grown smaller in the city, and he was already troubled by the thought. His heart swelled in gratitude to the boys, and with returning confidence in his luck he quickly responded: "Of course I'll do it. I'll make you equal partners with me. How will that suit?"

"No," said George, "I don't think that

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would be fair. You're taking all the risk and doing all the work. We'll be satisfied with a quarter interest. It's tough luck we can't go and share the work, but if you'll let us take a share in the expense we'll be glad."

Jack had an air of being a merchant and selling something very tangible as he said: "All right. I'll draw up the agreement right now." This he did on a scrap of paper, and they all shook hands over it with high expectations just as the conductor began to call the train.

When he returned to his berth, after waving his hat in farewell at the boys, Jack found a powerfully built, dark-bearded man of about fifty years of age, stowing his outfit under the seat and otherwise making himself quite at home. He glanced up sharply as Jack drew near. "Number nine?" he queried.

Jack looked at his ticket. "Yes, upper nine."

"Then we're seat-mates," replied the stranger, with a faint smile. "But I reckon we won't quarrel."

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Our young gold-hunter was profoundly impressed by the strength of the stranger's broad shoulders and by his impassive, almost sullen face, and soon became deeply interested too in his outfit, which was worn with use. He seemed indeed the typical miner.

The car was filled with other land-seekers and gold-hunters of all conditions and from all parts of the world. Some of them were from Australia, and a few had come from far-off Africa; but the larger number were residents of Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois, with nothing particularly distinctive about them. Nearly all were going to the gold-fields by rail and boat; but as Jack enlarged upon the advantages of his route, mentioning the antelope and caribou he expected to shoot, and the wild-fowl he hoped to see on the blue, rippling lakes of the Long Trail, some of the younger men became wistful-eyed, and one went so far as to say, "I wish I was going that way myself."

"I wish you were," Jack responded, magnanimously.

He woke the next morning in a land disap-

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pointingly like his own native prairie in Iowa. But as the day wore on the dry plains appeared, the prairie-dogs frisked and barked, and the winding, deep-worn trails of the vanished buffalo stirred the boy's blood with the thought of their majestic presence here on this very sod only a few years before. There was, indeed, something grand and wild in the illimitable sweep of this untracked plain, and under other conditions Jack would have been glad to spend a month or two hunting antelope.

All that day the train drove steadily towards the west into an ever-wilder country, over immense reaches of prairie, driving towards mountains dimly seen in the west, and for hours at a time Jack hung from a window glowing with satisfaction over the choice he had made.

The car rumbled with talk, but Jack's seat-mate remained darkly impassive, his lax hands hooked over the seat, his face silent and stern. Banks of snow-white brant sat on the lakes, geese, ducks, and crane were plentiful, and bands of antelope raced with

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the train; but to all these the bearded miner paid no more attention than as though the plain were a farm and these antelope the cattle of a barn-yard. "He must be used to the game country," thought the boy.

Then came the mountains! To Jack, who had scarcely been out of his native prairie-town, these mighty uplifts of mother-earth were very thrilling, and the snow which covered them made him think very seriously for the first time of the cold of the land to which he had set his face. The menace as well as the mystery and majesty of the wilderness began to thrill him.

On the second day all constraint was laid aside. Train-men and passengers, drawn together by a common love of adventure, were as one family. The porters treated each prospector with marked respect, and the conductors seemed anxious to make them comfortable, as if forecasting in some way the hardships which were to follow the loss of the sleeping-car.

Some of the men played whist, and some sang songs, while the women cooked on the

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range forward or attended to their noisy babes or to their own toilets. Books were exchanged, and no one waited for an introduction. And yet all this pleasant freedom of speech did not draw a responsive word from the dark-browed man sitting at Jack's side. His eyes, in which the youth perceived something sad as well as stern, were usually fixed absently on the landscape whirling to the rear.

At last, on the third day, Jack tumbled from the train in the clear yellow dawn and found himself in Ashcroft, a squalid little town already swarming with prospectors in great variety of dress and of all conditions of beard. It swarmed also with boomers and horse-jockeys, and profane, loud-voiced teamsters. The streets were dry as ashes, and the roaring hot wind blew the dust in blinding clouds. The hotel to which he went for breakfast seemed chiefly bar-room, and was filled with blustering loafers who made the boy seem very pale-faced and very young.

As a matter of fact, his bewilderment grew as the day wore on. He found himself quite

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at a loss, now that he was at his starting-point. Plainly he had miscalculated. If Owen had been with him, or George, or a single person in whom he could put trust, he would not have felt so timid.

For two days he walked about, irresolute and uneasy, growing each hour more depressed. It was one thing to plan an outfit, but quite another to actually get it together and start. The whole project grew more difficult as he began to understand its practical details.

His store of money seemed to get smaller as he inquired the price of horses and groceries, and closer study developed that the trail was more than twelve hundred miles long, with only three points where supplies could be purchased; and the tales of its insects, its mud, rocks, and rivers, became more disheartening every day.

III

JACK MEETS A MASTER-TRAILER

FOR nearly a week he wandered about the horse - corrals, watching the wild little ponies being lassoed and broken. He was appalled by their ferocity. Horses he needed, that he knew; and he needed a partner; but each trailer was too busy with his own affairs to give him much attention, and no one offered him a chance to join a train.

To handle these ponies alone was out of the question; and yet, never having been among strangers before, the thought of joining one of these rough groups on such a journey seemed a very perilous thing indeed. In short, the golden river seemed farther off than when he left Cedarbank.

Once or twice he timidly inquired the price of horses, and went so far as to examine the

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various packing apparatus, thereby acquiring a knowledge of the difference between an *apparejo* and a *parfleche*; but his resolution failed him when contemplating the wild and bony little horses which the dealers were offering for sale. The bucking of these creatures was frightful.

To hit the Long Trail was not so simple as he had imagined. The luxury and comfort of his tourist-car grew each day more marked, and he wished he had gone in by way of the steamers. Only the memory of his boasting to George and Owen prevented him from changing his plan then and there. "I can't back out now," he said to himself.

He had been there for over a week, eating the sad grub of the best hotel, when who should take a seat opposite him at the table but the heavy-set dark-bearded man of silence with whom he had travelled on the train. He greeted Jack pleasantly enough, but something in his eyes gave the boy a little creepy feeling.

He was accompanied by a tall young fellow with a sun-burned mustache and a phleg-

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matic but pleasant face. His skin was brown as leather, but soft and unwrinkled. His hands were strong but not calloused, and his manner self-contained and masterful. Jack looked upon him with an admiration that grew from moment to moment. The slope of his shoulders was superb, and the tone of his voice full of quiet power.

The dark-bearded man called him Mason, and was apparently giving him orders for acquiring an outfit; and to all of his orders the young fellow laconically replied: "All right, Colonel. It shall be done." He was plainly both cow-boy and trailer.

Jack plucked up courage to ask them if they were going over the Long Trail. They replied that they were. And, yielding to an impulse, our puzzled hero confided his troubles to his former seat-mate, the "Colonel," and said: "I've never been on the trail, and these vicious horses scare me. I didn't realize how hard it would be to find a partner, either. I don't know just what to do."

The Colonel replied in a kindlier tone than Jack anticipated. "We'll see what we can do

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for you. I met a couple of young fellows on the train, from Vancouver, who will take a partner, and Mason here will give you a pointer or two on your outfit."

Jack was profoundly grateful for this promise of aid, and went with the Colonel to the great Hudson Bay trading-store, where they found the two young men busily getting their stores. To the larger of these men, a tall, wall-eyed youth of twenty-two or three, Jack was introduced.

"Mr. Davis, here is a young chap who wants to yoke up with somebody for the trail. If you three fellows can hitch, I think you will find it to your mutual advantage."

Davis was not very cordial, and Jack was not especially pleased with him; but they shook hands, and the third man, Connery, was introduced.

"Well, now," said the Colonel, "I'll leave you to make a trade, and if you want any help, go to Mason, he's a master-trailer."

Davis and Connery were from Portland, Oregon, and were mechanics, with no more experience of the wilds than Jack possessed,

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but their conceit was unbounded. They felt equal to proceeding to the mouth of the Liard, or of rafting down the Saskatchewan, only they were short of funds. For that reason they were willing to take a third man. They warmed to Jack when they found he had several hundred dollars in cash, and they at once formed what Mason called a "side-partnership"; but Davis, who drew up the papers, was careful to stipulate that Jack was only a trail-partner, and was to have no share in any discovery they might make on the road. He was to furnish two horses and one third of all the outfit, and to do the cooking.

Connery was a small, talkative man several years older than Davis, and assumed the captainship of the whole enterprise. They were encamped at the time in a small tent not far from the store, and Jack moved his traps down there at once to save hotel-bills and to cook their supper. This was not a bit interesting, for the wind blew the sand into everything he tried to make and the smoke nearly blinded his eyes. He was a

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handy boy naturally, and though this was his first real attempt at cooking a camp meal he did very well.

Closer study of his partners did not improve his opinion of them, but he saw no other way of getting into the gold-fields, and his honor was at stake. He persuaded Davis to take up with Mason's advice and to let him buy their horses for them, which he did; and they all set to work to select and break the ponies.

For some reason which Jack could not understand, the horse-dealers treated Mason with astonishing respect; and the Colonel, when questioned about it, said: "Mason is one of the best-known trailers in Montana; a thoroughly good fellow, but when he fights, he kills. Take every bit of advice he offers to heart, for what he don't know about trailing no man in British Columbia can teach him."

This brief history of Mason put the young fellow before Jack in a most absorbing attitude. His calm and reticence veiled, it seemed, a death-dealing temper, and the boy

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realized, or thought he did, that he was in the presence of one of the famous "bad men" of whom he had read. He longed to know more of his history; but though his eyes were always smiling his face did not invite familiarity.

A couple of days later, under Mason's deft and resolute guidance, the three greenhorns were ready to start. Their train of eight cayuses, as Jack had learned to call their ponies, were packed, their creaking new saddles were cinched tight, and Jack, appointed leader for the day, was told to ride ahead and keep the trail.

"Now, lad," said Mason, a little smile creeping around his pleasant brown eyes, "let me give you a nudge or two. On the trail your horses are the first consideration. Don't look for fancy camping-places for yourselves; just camp where the grass is, and remember you can't lope a pack-train. You've got to crawl. If you make twelve to sixteen miles a day and strike feed and water, you stop and wait for another sun." Here he looked them all over, and his smile deepened.

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“It’s a ripping good thing you greengages have a couple of hundred miles to practise on before you hit the sure ’nough trail, for you’ll likely sunburn a shade or two before you reach the Quesnelle River, and that will be good for your blood. Now, watch your horses. Keep their feet shod and their backs clean. So long!—and be good to yourselves.”

IV

JACK FINDS NEW TRAIL-PARTNERS

JACK felt a return of his exaltation as he headed the little train of horses up the dusty hills, leaving the furnace-like valley below him. It was almost the realization of his hope. He was now really and truly on his way towards the wild country, towards the golden river. It was spring, and the sky was superb. Gold-hunting was to be a fine and picturesque business after all. "If only Owen and George were with me!" he exclaimed. "This is just the thing we planned for."

This elation was short-lived. One of the pack-horses took offence at something and began to "buck"—that is to say, to jump up and down with immense energy, falling back on his stiffened legs with wicked intent to jar

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his load from his back. For a few minutes it was very amusing to Jack, but the other men took it much more to heart, and they were right; for the pony not only succeeded in scattering his own burden, but scared the others so that they all ran back towards the flat, strewing the path with meat and flour and sacks of other valuables. As a result, the expedition camped right there, only three miles out, to the amusement of all the other gold-seekers, whose horses contrived to go at least out of sight of the railway.

That night and next morning Jack and his companions put in learning to tie their baggage upon their horses, which was not at all as simple as it seemed. They had all heard of the diamond-hitch, but not one could tie it, and nothing would stay in place.

However, they got under way about noon, after a great deal of hard work and a considerable display of ill-temper on the part of both horses and men.

The pack-ponies would not lead, and the men dared not turn them loose on the trail for fear of their breaking away and return-

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ing. Being unused to their burdens, they were madly determined to rub against the trees in the hope of getting rid of their packs, and one or two of them seized every moment to run off into the thickets.

The weather grew cold and frosty as they rose, and as Jack was inexperienced as a cook, and the other fellows knew nothing about trailing, their first week was a severe schooling. It was hard to rise in the morning when the keen north wind was blowing, and Jack resented being forced to build the fire while his partners slept. He had insufficient bedding, too, and on the second night their camp was so high that he hardly slept at all. Then, too, the saddle galled him, and his knees were lame.

With all these other discomforts he had to endure the gibes of his companions, who did not at all improve on acquaintance. Davis was lazy, and Connery was profane and common of speech. Jack, being a well brought up lad, wearied of the coarse songs and stupid jokes of his companions. Connery he especially disliked, for he turned out to be an

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incessant talker and took endless delight in complaining of the cooking, which was unjust, for Jack was improving very rapidly and his meals were very good, indeed.

Nevertheless, there were hours of pure enjoyment, and he never once dreamed of taking the back-trail.

For a week their way led for the most part along a wagon-road through a sparsely settled country, and Jack enjoyed to the full the sound of loons laughing in the pools, while ducks and geese flying overhead were honking down through a glorious sky their exultant, bugling signals of command.

In order to escape criticism as a tenderfoot, he cooked at his camp-fire in the most primitive fashion; and the same vanity led him to expose himself quite needlessly to the elements. He slept on the ground outside his tent, and opened his shirt at the throat to show that he was not afraid of the wind. He sought seasoning. His new hat grew a little dirtier and a little floppier each day, and he watched it acquiring tone with delight. He was like the smoker who rejoices to see

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his meerschaum-pipe cloud with use; and when they drew into the little Hudson Bay trading-post at the Forks of the Quesnelle, after ten days' camping, he felt no fear of the wilderness, but his dislike of his companions had deepened into distrust.

In the intimacy of the camp they had shown themselves to be both dishonest and vengeful; and Jack especially feared Conner, who had a mean little face and a hot and furtive eye.

At Quesnelle, on the bank of the swift and savage Fraser River, the stories of the wild lands to the north grew in power as they came across the dark, cold flood. Even to a man of wide experience the question of feed for the horses, the promise of enormous clouds of mosquitoes, as well as the lack of game along the trail, gave the next stage of the journey a very serious import.

They went into camp for the day, pitching tent just back of the little village, waiting for the steamboat that was to ferry them across the river. They occupied the time in buying some provisions to replenish their larder.

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At last, after all preparations were made, the boat took them on board and set them across, and they went into camp on a little narrow space of cleared land at the edge of a dark forest which covered the rolling hills to the west as far as the eye could see. Into the shadow of this forest the little path which led to the Golden River entered as obscurely as a snake. It seemed impossible that so small a road should be so long and so famous.

Jack was surprised and delighted to find Mason and the Colonel encamped on the west bank of the river, and his heart glowed with a rush of genuine affection for the handsome trailer who had done so much for him, and who called out in his curiously indifferent way: "Hello, son. How are you making out?"

"Pretty well. But we had one or two cold nights up on the ridge."

Mason looked at him over a horse which he was saddling, and his eyes grew quizzical. "You've acquired that sunburn—or maybe you are just frost-bit."

Jack was pleased by this remark, and

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laughingly replied: "I guess it's the smoke, partly. You see I have to do the cooking."

"How do you get on with those three-by-six 'side-partners' of yours?"

Jack's smile faded away. "Not very well," he answered; and after looking around cautiously, added: "Davis is so lazy that I have to do part of his work, and I don't like Connerly a bit. He's been in jail once."

"Well, that's a nice partner! How did you find that out?"

"Well, they got to quarrelling one day, and Davis just up and called him a jail-bird. I'm almost afraid to go any farther with them. I'm sure they'd rob me if they got a good chance. I don't trust them."

Mason looked serious. "Well, now, see here, you mustn't let yourself get crosswise with your partners. On this trail you're going to be tied up mighty close for a couple of months, and you can't afford to kick over trifles when you're in the middle of a Canadian forest. You've got to be patient. If you get to quarrelling in camp it will be blue-Monday all the week."

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"I know it," replied Jack. "And that's what bothers me. They fight almost every day—and they hate me."

The Colonel, coming up at this moment, greeted Jack absently, but not unkindly, and said: "You made pretty good time. I didn't expect to see you again."

Jack went back to his own fire more deeply dissatisfied with his partners than ever, but realized his helplessness. He was now more than two hundred miles on his journey, and the chances for joining another train were very poor. There was no point of supply nearer than the Forks of the Skeena, and all reports of the trail were very stern.

As Mason said, he was tied close to these men. Their outfits had all been thrown together and it would be hard to separate the goods even if they were to consent to a division. They had thrown the heavy end of all the camp work upon him from the first, and latterly he had been forced to build the fire, cook the breakfast, rouse them out of bed, and often to round up and help saddle the horses in order to get a decently early start.

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Davis now led the train, sending Jack to the rear to urge the pack-animals along. In short, Jack felt that he was being treated like a servant instead of as an equal partner, and by men whom he both disliked and feared.

That night, however, brought another and graver indictment against his partners. They were both away in the village all day, and came to camp late at night drunk and quarrelsome. Connery seemed especially disposed to make trouble. He came over to where Jack lay, disgusted and alarmed, and giving him a kick in the side ordered him to get up and cook some supper.

Jack was indignant, and replied: "I will not. If you are hungry, go and get it yourself." Connery again kicked him, and this time so viciously that Jack rose, moved by a mighty resentment, and grappled with him and threw him into a corner of the tent, where he lay perfectly helpless.

Davis, whom drink had made foolish, laughed at his partner's predicament.

"Served you right, Mike," he said. "Served you right—you jail-bird."

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The boy's heart was swollen with anger and dismay. Dressing himself, he walked over towards Mason's fire, hoping to find him still up. The trailer, in fact, was sitting with his back to a tree, with his feet to the dying fire, smoking peacefully. The Colonel was in his tent.

"Hello, son!" called Mason. "Better turn in. To-morrow comes early in this climate."

"What would you do if you had a couple of drunken partners?" Jack furiously inquired.

The trailer showed concern. "Have your two beauties loaded up to-night?"

"Yes, they are both so drunk they can't stand, and Connery has been kicking me. I'm going to leave them, if I have to go in alone. I can't stand them any longer."

"Oh! I wouldn't discard them for this one spree. It'll be a long time before they reach another bar."

"It isn't that, altogether, but I am afraid they'll rob me and leave me in the forest. Connery keeps trying to find out how much money I have left, and I am almost afraid

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to go to sleep. I want you to help me get my stuff away from there to-morrow morning. Will you do it? I'd rather go in alone than to stay with such men another day."

Mason looked at him speculatively. "That's a pretty hard record you give them, but I can't say I was much taken with them myself. But, boy, look a-here, you don't want to make any mistake. Right here you quit play and begin business. That little twelve-inch gauge of a road," and he nodded towards the forest, "is eight hundred miles long, with no bridges and no tunnels. What you eat you will have to pack right along with you. There's only one stopping-place between here and the Stikeen. Your week of trailing on this river-road has been only a practice mark. To go into that trail alone is a good stiff proposition for an old mountaineer, let alone a boy of your age. I advise you not to do it."

These words did not destroy Jack's courage. On the contrary, they roused in him the spirit of his bold father, and he answered: "I will not turn back now, no matter what

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happens. And I won't go on with these men; that's settled. I'll find some one else."

The Colonel, speaking from his tent, asked what the matter of the discussion was, and after Mason had told him, gravely and kindly said, "You'd better go back to your camp, my lad; your partners will be all right in the morning. Many a good man has a bad moment."

"But Mike kicked me!" exclaimed Jack; "and we had a fight and I threw him."

"Oh, he'll forget that," remarked Mason, from his wealth of experience. "He'll respect you all the more for it."

The Colonel turned to his partner and asked, reflectively: "Mason, do you suppose this lad could stand our pace?"

"He seems a gritty little bantam. I shouldn't wonder if he could."

After a moment's further thought the older man again turned to Jack. "We're making time, my lad, and it will be all day and every day with us. But if you want to trail along with us and camp beside us, we'll kind o' keep an eye on you."

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Jack's throat so filled with gratitude that he could hardly utter his thanks, and the Colonel, as he turned to re-enter his tent, paused and said, warningly: "We hit the trail to-morrow morning early, so be ready to go. Mason, you might help him a little the first day or two."

Notwithstanding this warning, Jack lingered, loath to leave these, his only friends. "Let me sit here by your fire till morning?" he said, at last, as Mason began to unroll his own bed. "I daren't go back there to-night."

The trailer rose. "I see. Well, you need your bed. I reckon I'd better go along to see that you get it."

Jack had really been ashamed to ask him to do this, and was profoundly grateful for his offer of aid. Together they returned to his own camp, where they found the two drunken men sleeping soundly. Hastily rolling up his bedding, the boy followed Mason back to his camp, and there spread his blankets with a feeling of perfect safety.

The trailer, with a word of good-night,

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slung a fold of his tarpaulin over the boy to ward off the dew, and went off to sleep at once.

Jack, however, lay for a long time, too excited and too joyous to close his eyes. He was like one rescued from the hands of robbers, so thoroughly did he fear and distrust Connery. His heart went out to Mason in boyish admiration, and the sombre face of the Colonel seemed much less forbidding. Stern as he was, he had been nothing but kindness from the very first moment of their meeting.

But beneath all, the boy felt for the first time a forecast of victory. "I'll go through now, sure," he exulted. "These men will take me through."

He could hear the rush of the river and the voice of the night winds in the pines, but he no longer feared the illimitable land which rolled away to the west and north like the savage waves of a black sea. There was a kind of heroism in discovering its mysteries.

V

JACK ENTERS THE WILDERNESS

WHEN Jack awoke next morning, Mason was kicking the embers of the fire together and the Colonel was bringing in the horses. The east was a pale lemon color, and the air was chill, almost frosty.

Jack sprang up resolutely. "I'll get breakfast," he cried.

"Can you cook?" asked the Colonel, with interest.

"I did all the cooking up the road," he replied, "and I'm getting handy."

"All right; you may try your hand, and welcome."

The boy set to work to do his best, and while he rattled among the dishes the Colonel and Mason packed the horses, talking together in quiet voices. Busied as he was

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Jack could not but observe and admire the precision, the deftness, and the power with which the two men got their outfit in order. By the time the coffee was steaming and the bacon ready, the horses were all saddled and the packs ready for the rope.

As Mason dipped into the oat-meal he said: "Boy, you'd better start a lunch-counter when you get in."

The Colonel did not second this word of praise, but in action gave full credit to his cook.

As they rose, Mason remarked: "Now, while I wash the dishes, the Colonel will take you over to get your duffle."

Jack would have been perfectly helpless and quite at the mercy of his partners without aid, and he walked along beside the Colonel with a feeling of exaltation, all dread of the meeting with Connery gone.

As a matter of fact, neither of the drunken men woke until Jack had entirely finished the division of the outfit and had his horses ready to move.

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Davis sat up first, and called out: "Hold on, there! Where are you going?"

"To Teslin Lake," replied Jack; "the place you'll never see."

Davis sat up. "What do you mean? Are you leaving us?"

"Yes, I am."

"What for?"

"You know what for."

Davis looked at his saddled horses. "Well, you want to be mighty careful what you take with you."

The Colonel, who was cinching one of the horses, turned to Davis and said, very quietly: "This boy is going to travel with us from this on, and my advice to you is to keep a civil tongue in your head. I've made a careful division of the outfit and there is nothing further to say." And with that he took up one of the lead-ropes. "*Line up!*" he called, sharply.

With that word Jack began to know a little of the energy, the decision, and the persistency of purpose of his leader.

They returned to camp with Jack's pack-

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horses, and a half-hour later, our hero riding in the middle of the train, started on the long trail, with Mason cheerily singing in the rear. In five minutes they left all sign of the wagon-wheel, the town, and the steam-boat behind them and plunged into an apparently endless forest of pines. A feeling of awe swept over the boy at the thought of the mighty wilderness ahead, but his confidence in his new companions was so strong that he rode on with swelling heart, eager for each hour's disclosure of the wild.

It was well that he was light and hardened to the saddle, for the Colonel pushed ahead for eight hours without a pause, rising and falling over the wooded ridges, crossing small streams, skirting marshes, and treading fields of wind-blown, fire-scarred trees. Three full hours after the lad's body cried out for food and rest, his leader rode on remorselessly, while in the rear, cheery and tireless, Mason urged the weary pack-animals to their best pace.

All day they passed other outfits, less capable of making time than themselves, and Jack

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took note of a singular curiosity in the action of the Colonel, who scrutinized every camp as if looking for some one. He stopped his train at times, or made a *détour* in order to study the brand on a horse, or to speak a word of inquiry to those about the fires; and once Jack overheard a man say in reply: "Yes, two men of that description passed us at Soda Creek four days ago. They had good horses and were making time."

From all this Jack got the idea that the Colonel was anxious to overtake some friends, and Mason, in answer to his query, carelessly answered: "Yes, I believe some of his acquaintances are ahead of us somewhere." But his answer was not entirely satisfactory.

One night, as they went into camp on the bank of a reedy lake, Mason called out: "Boy, we've decided to take you into our camp, if you feel like cooking our grub. I 'gee' when it comes to cooking, and the Colonel's bread is sure death at half a mile. What do you say?"

"I'll be glad to. I'll do the best I can for

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you," cried the boy in reply, and his face shone with joy.

Mason remained ominous. "This is no picnic you're working into. If you cook two meals every day and take care of the kitchen-ware and the cupboard, you are going to earn your passage, sure thing."

"I'm not afraid. I want to earn my way."

"Well, that's settled. Now, whenever we unpack, you make it your business to light into the 'commissary,' and stir up something to eat. The Colonel and I will do the rest."

Jack was perfectly satisfied with this arrangement. True, it was not easy to get up in the frosty dawn and cook by a smoky fire, but he resolutely did so, while Mason rustled the horses and the Colonel struck the tent. A couple of hours' work of a morning, and then at the cry, "Line 'em up," the horses fell into place like bits of machinery and the day's travel began.

It was all tremendously fine and interesting to the boy. Each day was a wonder and a delight. Sometimes two or three outfits after camping of a night were able to start

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together of a morning, and it was a fine sight when a score or two of horses went winding, like a canvas-colored worm, over the hills—the bells clanging, the mules braying, and the sharp, stern cries of the drivers breaking the early morning quiet. Once or twice they pitched tents on a splendid river-meadow or on the banks of a lake, and the tinkle of herdbells, the ring of axes, the clash of tin dishes, made cheery music, and Jack wondered if anything finer ever took place on “the overland trail” of which his father used to speak. When the flaring camp-fires arose beside each tent or pile of baggage, and the odor of bacon and coffee filled the air, it seemed the perfection of trailing; the most desirable form of travel.

The evenings grew rapidly longer. It was daylight till nine o'clock and twilight till half-past ten. They went to bed while the sky was red with sunlight, and when they arose, even at five o'clock, the day seemed far advanced.

During all these days their stern and silent leader never relaxed his search, which, in a

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most unaccountable way, had begun to impress Jack as a pursuit. He questioned every outfit he overtook, and when they answered, "Yes, passed us four days ago," or "three days ago," he seemed to grow sterner, and his cry of "Line 'em up" pierced our boy's heart with a pang of inexplicable excitement, so stern and so intense was the Colonel's face at the time.

But, after all, the days were joyous. Was he not driving straight towards the Golden River in company with the most experienced and reliable guides? Besides, he was young, and hope always leads the way for the young.

VI

JACK MEETS WITH INDIANS

ONE day they passed a glorious lake on whose banks the grass stood high enough to ripple in the wind, and strange flowers, yellow and purple, lit the green slopes with vivid flame. Jack felt that here at last was the ideal hunting-ground towards which he had been travelling, and it made him suddenly remember the prairie of his home.

On the right were the most splendid savannas, wherein it seemed noble elk and caribou must certainly any moment appear, and he rode forward brimming with joy. "Oh, if only Owen and George were here to see this!" he exclaimed. This was, indeed, the kind of thing he had talked with them about. And to traverse such a country with his young companions would have been the highest form of enjoyment.

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The Colonel, on the other hand, seemed not to look to right nor left, taking little interest in the beautiful game-pastures; and Mason, though admiring the splendid lake and its rocky, mysterious islands, gave no word or sign of wishing to remain in camp upon its banks. They spent but one night in this beautiful spot, and were up and away early the next morning, leaving the glorious lake behind them.

They were now in the head-waters of the Nechaco River, and were just entering the valley, or, rather, the water-shed, of the great Skeena River, which was but indefinitely laid out upon the map, for the very good reason that it had never been fully explored.

It was navigable for some two hundred miles, and at the head of navigation the Hudson Bay Company, with fearless enterprise, had established a station or trading-post, and towards the village of Hazelton the trail was tending in easy, sinuous way, looping across high timbered hills, following small streams to their source, and zigzagging across low divides to other streams down which it

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patiently descended. It never rose very high, and never fell, of course, to sea-level.

It was well that Jack enjoyed to the full those days along the Black Water and beside Tchincut Lake, for on the very day following their camp on its bank, clouds began to close down upon them. Thus far they had been troubled by little rain, and the trail was dry and dusty.

All that day the heavens behind them seemed to thicken and to threaten. A vast cloud of smoke ascended from a burning forest far to the west, heating the sky till it glowed like brass and bronze mingled. The wind, hot and dry, roared round the little train of horses like an unseen torrent, menacing and majestic. A burning dust arose from beneath their horses, and Jack's face was covered as with a mask. The land seemed suddenly to have become as dry as ashes and in danger of bursting into flame.

Late in the afternoon they came to the confluence of the Nechaco and Endako, two swift and powerful streams. The rain-clouds which had been threatening all day were close

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at hand, and as our hero looked out on the broad, swift, silent gray waters he realized for the first time the sinister barrier a river in a wild country can be. Ferries acquired a value he had not hitherto placed upon them. He was appalled at the problem of crossing.

His resolute companions, however, instructed him. They unsaddled and piled their packs on the bank of the river. They cut trees, and with their sling-ropes tied them together in the form of a raft, on which to ferry the baggage across.

When all was ready they felled trees in such wise as to form a little corral near the sloping bank, and having driven the horses into the enclosure they forced them thence into the flood. The water was icy cold and the horses dreaded it, but at last they plunged in and by hard swimming reached the opposite side.

By this time Jack had acquired such confidence in his leaders that he was quite ready to take his place upon the raft, even though the water of the river was swift and black and the rain was spattering upon it. They

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anded in a pouring rain, and our hero, wet and muddy and weak with hunger, hastened to build a fire to get supper.

Hardly a word was spoken among them, but each man knew his duty, and in a short time the tent was up, the fire glowing, and the smell of coffee gave comforting assurance of supper.

It rained all that night and all the next day, and the Colonel was for pushing on, but Mason argued against it. "We lose nothing by waiting, for no one else will travel on a day like this, and, besides, one or two of our horses need the rest."

The logic of this appealed to the Colonel, but he seemed very uneasy and very curt all day. It was plain that he chafed at every hour's delay, and Jack again asked himself, and this time much more definitely, "What does this pursuit mean? Why is he so anxious to overtake the men with the sorrel horses?" There had never been any word, hardly a hint, on Mason's part, as to what he thought of this journey, and Jack did not know whether to consider the trader a part-

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ner to the Colonel, or only a guide. Both men were too self-contained, too masterful and Jack himself too young and boyish, for any confidences to be exchanged.

The boy, therefore, as he sat by the camp fire during that gloomy rainy day, was free to imagine what he pleased, and he imagined something very fine and heroic.

His fancies ran this way: "The Colonel is an officer of some kind from Montana, and is in search of some great criminal—perhaps an embezzler, who is seeking escape by plunging into the wilderness. The Colonel probably went on to Vancouver or Seattle on the trail only to find that his quarry had doubled on his trail. Still in pursuit, he had returned to Ashcroft, and is now hot and determined at the heels of the wrong-doer."

It was well that Jack had something to occupy his mind, because Mason was busy putting his outfit in order and not in particularly cheerful mood, and the Colonel slept nearly all day. On all sides lay a wild, wide country. In every direction the fir-clad ridges met and mingled with the deso

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late rain-clouds. At their feet the cold, swift, and silent waters swept, swirling, like oil, dimpled by the water drops falling incessantly.

Rain brought out all the disagreeable phases of camp-life. Everything was cold and clammy. Jack's boots, blankets, and clothing grew each hour soggier. It was almost impossible to cook at the sputtering camp-fire. The tent, half filled with ill-smelling saddles, pads, and tarpaulins, left little space to spread a blanket. The spirit of adventure, which had moved the boy under the sun, by the lake, was entirely absent now, and yet he took a kind of joy in enduring these discomforts.

"A fellow can't expect to have it all nice and sunshiny all the time," he said, as if speaking to George and Owen; and if he could have exhibited himself to them in his worn, wet, and mouldy condition he would have taken a certain pride in it.

During the second day he came for the first time into touch with the natives, for the camp was near a village of Carrier Indians,

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and when they discovered the trailers, groups of short, swarthy, young fellows came to visit them. They looked like Chinese and clicked their tongues in astonishment over everything which the white man possessed. They did not beg and were not in the least meddlesome, and Jack was rather glad of their company.

They were wonderful boatmen, but knew nothing whatever of horses. They spoke but a few words of Chinook, and though Jack was able to pass but a phrase or two with them, he somehow came to a pleasant understanding of them and was able to get at their way of living.

They professed not to understand this mysterious irruption of white men into their country. "Where do they come from? Where are they going?" they seemed to ask.

To their questions Mason replied, in rather lame Chinook: "Hyu white men come. Go klap pilchickamen," which means "They go hunt gold"; and with this they were forced to be content.

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They had heard also in some dim way that herds of "moomoos," cattle, were on the way, and they were much more excited about these cows than they were about the gold-seekers. On the whole, Jack rather liked them.

The fishing was good here, and some of the lads were glad to show Jack a whirlpool just below the camp, wherein they said swam "*Hyu* fish."

Jack found this to be perfectly true, for he caught four large fish, somewhat resembling a pike, the largest he had ever drawn from the water in his life, and he returned to his camp-fire in high pride and joy.

As he served these smoking hot at supper the Colonel complimented him for the first time in several days, and these words from his leader added to his cheerfulness, so that not even the promise of another rainy night could depress him.

Since leaving Quesnelle, the Colonel, though he seldom spoke harshly and never at any time demanded an unjust thing, was nevertheless curt and stern and addressed the boy

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only to say, "Good-night," or to utter a cold "Good-morning."

Mason was almost equally reticent, so far as his own personal affairs were concerned, and checked all inquiry on Jack's part concerning their leader. But he was not uncommunicative. He talked about the country and about gold-mining and trailing, and told stories of his cow-boy life in a quiet and exceedingly interesting way, treating the boy as his equal.

"I am from Montana and I'm a cow-man and trailer," he said once, with a twinkle in his eye. "You've heard the story of the man who was riding in the car with the inquisitive individual who wanted to know how he lost his leg, and who finally said, 'If you won't ask any more questions I'll tell you.' The fellow promised, you remember, and then the one-legged man said, 'It was bit off.'"

Here Mason gave his listener a significant look. "You're all eaten up with curiosity about the Colonel, I can see that, but of course it's none of your affair. However, I'll tell you. We met up on the train at Junc-

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tion City, the Colonel and I, and he hired me to pack him in. Now that's all I know about it."

Jack was not entirely convinced of Mason's apparent frankness, but he was forced to be content with this half-confidence, which was a result of their long day in camp in the rain. "He is right. What business of mine is it whether the Colonel is an officer or not, so long as he treats me right?"

VII

JACK REACHES THE SKEENA

At last the clouds broke, and saddling up with great energy they set off, the Colonel leading the way as before. But the good trailing was gone. There was to be no more careless rising and falling over the hills. The horses splashed ankle-deep in mud and running water. The hills were slippery and hard to climb; the pack-horses labored heavily. But the sky was very beautiful, and the radiant green foliage and the shouting of the robins made the boy's heart leap with delight. The roaring streams, which defied the little train, the mud mid-leg deep, were only so many enemies to be met and conquered.

He was troubled by the worn-out horses which they began to pass during these days—pack-animals that had fallen sick or had been

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abandoned in the deep mud or in the quicksands of the streams. Jack had always been a lover of horses, and he looked into the faces of these poor creatures with almost the same pity he would have felt for men in distress. They gazed at him with infinite reproach in their big, sad eyes.

The Colonel, however, examined them for their brands, without pity in his glance; and in one case a gleam of malevolent joy shone in his eyes as he placed his foot on one of these dead animals, a bald-faced sorrel, and with a note of triumph in his voice he cried out, sharply: "We're pushing them hard, Mason. Here's one of their horses."

This remark, this look, took the last element of doubt out of Jack's mind. The Colonel was in pursuit, not of friends, but of enemies.

The days that followed were days of toil. Jack helped pull horses from the mire and took his share of packing goods across log bridges. He helped cut brush to fill in bad mud-holes, and felled trees to build corduroy roads over quicksand.

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The Colonel displayed the energy of a giant and the tenacity of a grizzly. The swing of his axe betrayed the expert woodman, and he dragged at tree-trunks and mowed down willows with an energy that never flagged. Under such leadership no man could shirk nor complain. Each night the boy went to bed stiff and sore and reeking wet.

They were now high in the mountains where the streams lay in boggy meadows, and where the mosquitoes bred in millions. There was scarcely a moment when the sun shone that they did not cover each man's face as with a cloud. At night these small gray insects gave place to larger black ones which seemed able to endure the cold, to become even more ferocious as the chill of midnight deepened. Sleep was impossible till after midnight, and daylight came at three o'clock. This was the kind of trailing that makes a man of a boy.

The way became each day wilder. Magnificent mountains, blazing like armored warriors wearing helmets of snow and breast

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plates of ice, rose all about the trail; but the weather was glorious overhead, and Jack was able to hum an exultant tune occasionally in the middle of the day. The toil of the day he did not so much mind, but the nights were a torture! The mosquitoes covered his hands while he cooked, and he was obliged to go inside the tent and drive out the little pests before he could eat in any comfort.

The only game was grouse, and of these there were plenty. Jack achieved a certain respect for these birds because of their ability to defeat the flies. "I wish I had feathers on my legs and hands," he said one night.

To this Mason dryly responded. "You seem to be acquiring epidermis. By-and-by you'll get leathery enough not to mind a bumblebee. See the way these Injuns put up with 'em."

The Colonel's untiring energy and his skill in the use of horses enabled them to leave almost every other outfit behind, and they were now travelling as lonely as though no

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other gold-seekers were on the trail; but "the sorrel outfit" kept well out of reach.

"He must want to join those fellows pretty bad," Jack ventured to repeat to Mason one day, while the Colonel was out of ear-shot.

Mason gave him a look that took him a little deeper into his confidence. "That's what," said he, in the queer vernacular which he used. "'Pears like he couldn't live without 'em. And it does seem like they just as soon travel alone, don't you think? But, see here, boy, don't you let the old man know that you're getting curious about his business, because he's growing crankier every day."

It was now full summer. As they descended, wild-roses broke in bloom—millions and millions of them, and strawberries began to ripen on the vines. Grass was knee-high in open spaces beside the brook, and Jack began to feel as though he had been on the trail for months. And still the Colonel hurried forward.

Our hero was as eager to hasten as his leader, but for a different reason. He was

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worn out with the insects. To cook was now a veritable battle, a carnage, for every stroke of his palm left a bloody streak of crushed mosquitoes. At times he was forced to wear netting over his head, and Mason accused him of kneading the bread with his gloves on. But the boy hotly declared that he used a spoon and just stirred it.

They were following a tributary of the Bulkley, and the trail, though silent and lonely, still showed the passage of a good many horses; and it was evident that the Colonel rose each morning with a sharpening expectation of coming upon his quarry before the sun went down.

At last they crossed the high divide and began to wind down along the bank of the Bulkley, and the way grew pleasanter. At the end of their fifth week out of Ashcroft they dropped down to Hazelton at the Forks of the Skeena.

It was about four o'clock of the afternoon, and as Jack looked out upon the spread of the Bulkley, which ran between them and the post, he wondered how they were to get

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across, so swift and so wide was the current.

The Indians who came to their aid were most skilful boatmen, and as Mason delivered the second bunch of horses into the hands of these small brown ferrymen, he said: "I take off my hat to you. You sure know all about rivers and canoes." And as he watched them conduct the horses across the swift and terrible stream, he added: "They know as much about canoes as a cow-boy does about a cayuse."

It was wonderful to see how those little men manipulated their canoes on the gray, glacial river, where not one drop of water seemed at rest, where no whirlpools offered anchorage.

Mason was amazed at their chattering. "The Injuns I've known," he said, "are quiet chaps. Not much doing in the line of talk. At first I sized these fellows up as a lot of blackbirds, but I'm mistaken. They can use a paddle just as well as they use their tongues."

This was true. In their big canoes, with a steersman at the stern and another at the

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bow, and with one or two paddling in the middle, all crazily whooping and apparently scared to death, they were in reality the most precise and powerful rivermen. They never failed to land their boats and the horses at the proper point. They knew exactly what to shout and when to dip their paddles.

Mason made camp that night just above the village, while the Colonel rode down to the trading-post to make inquiries, as he said, of the long trail which still lay in mystery ahead of them. A little later, Jack and Mason, eager for a sight of civilization, also went down to the village, which turned out to be a queer collection of Indian huts, barricades, stock-houses, and camps. It was a trading-post and a camp of natives, and had been established for many years.

Mason laid in some extra stores, while Jack wandered down to the wharf and about the streets of the strange little town.

"Well, partner," said the trailer, as they set out for camp, "as near as I can figure it, we're about half-way to Teslin Lake. According to the maps, it is four hundred miles

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to the Stikeen and two hundred more to where you build your raft. Now how do you feel about it?"

Jack's heart was big with gratitude towards his companion as he said: "I don't care what threatens so long as you are with me. I hope you're going through?"

"Oh, I'm going through, but I can't say about the Colonel. All depends on his 'friends.' If he finds they've left the trail here and gone down the river he'll quit. You see there are lots of Indian canoes going down to the coast from this point, and if those fellows ahead had any idea that the Colonel is on their trail, they've probably turned their bald-faced sorrels loose and jumped a canoe for the coast. I kind o' think that's what they've done. We'll soon know. But, anyhow, I'm not under contract to take to water."

The Colonel returned from his visit to the town with a face so stern and so dark that the boy shrank from him. "They're out-footing us," he said, darkly. "They passed here five days ago. We've got to pull out of here to-morrow morning early."

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To this remark, which was a command, Mason quietly said: "Can't do it, Colonel; we've got to get shod here."

The other man's eyes blazed with a sudden fire. "Would you let 'em escape?"

"What would you do with a lot of crippled stock?" replied Mason. "They're no fools. They've shod up here, you'll find, and bought fresh horses and more provisions, and we've got to do the same. It's a case of more haste the less speed here."

The Colonel acknowledged the logic of all this, and reluctantly consented. "Well, we'll put in one day here, so get what you need and get it quick."

"Now you're talking sense. A day or two won't lose your friends. The trail from here on, according to all the information I picked up, is a lulu. So far as I can find out, the stretch we've come over is a nice plank-road in comparison."

Again Jack went with Mason down into the little town to visit the trading-post, whose windows looked out upon the Skeena, a flood

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which made the Bulkley seem shallow and insignificant.

It came out of the north, the mysterious and icy north, where great, sharp, snow-covered peaks, unnamed and unmeasured, towered to the sky. It ran towards the range of glacial coast mountains, swift and menacing. Even as he gazed upon it the glistening body of a horse went drifting by, tossing and tumbling in the waters. "It must be wilder and swifter yet, up there," thought the lad.

As they were walking home, Mason broke silence by saying: "If I'm any judge, the Colonel's mad all the way through, and it's going to be worse and more of it from here on, and I've come to the conclusion, my lad, that you'd just better drop out right here. You can easily get passage down the river, either with the company's boat or one of these Indian canoes—"

The blood of his pioneer father flamed hot in Jack's face as he cried out: "What do you take me for? As long as I can sit a horse or stagger along, I'm going to stay with you—if

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you'll let me," he added, feeling that he was only a passenger after all.

Mason threw out his hand. "Good for you, laddie-buck. I'd be sorry to go on without you—" Here he seemed to feel that he had overstepped the bounds of his reserve, and added: "We sure need your cooking. If you go along I'll make it as easy for you as I can."

"Well, I'm going," cried Jack, "and I'm going to do my part, no matter what comes."

"I reckon we'd better all make up our minds to a considerable amount of work and worry," the trailer replied, with a quiet smile.

VIII

THE TRAIL GROWS WILDER

JACK had thought the crossing of the Bulkley River a feat, but when they faced the broad expanse of the Skeena, just above where the Kispyox entered from the west, he shivered with awe. "What could we do without these Indians and their boats?" he asked Mason.

"Not a thing," replied the trailer. "I'm no water-bug. I quit on a stream like this."

Again the chattering boatmen, driving their long canoe, took them in charge, and Mason submitted to the guidance with a kind of awkward boyishness. "I'm not accustomed to having anything done for me," he explained.

The Indians seemed as irrepressible as a box of monkeys, but they took the horses

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across with unerring skill and with high spirits. This struggle with the glacial water was as exhilarating to them, seemingly, as managing a bucking bronco would have been to Mason. In an hour or so the entire train and their packs were set across, and the horses, wet and weak, were under way.

For the first day their trail led along the west fork of the Skeena, which the Siwashes called "Kispyox." It was a beautiful stream, running over flashing ripples, the sunlight fell rich and warm, and wild roses in splendid sprays shook their odors upon Jack as he passed. The painter's brush lighted the grasses as with flames, while geraniums, columbines, and strawberry bloom reminded him of the meadows at home.

Just about sunset they entered a flat valley which was dotted with outfits in camp. Bells were tinkling merrily, and the sound of axes added a civilized note which was very grateful and cheering. As they passed, some of those in camp cried out, "You'd better stop here! They say there's no feed again for forty miles."

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"I guess they're trying to scare us," Mason remarked.

They went into camp a few miles above the flat, in the rain, a sudden downpour which Mason thought would be only a shower. He was deceived. It was raining when they woke the next morning, and it rained all day. They remained in camp, too tired to pack up, and Jack, sitting above the struggling flame of his camp-fire, listened to the guarded talk of his elders.

The Colonel was secretly exultant over the news of the evil chances ahead of them. "I've got them in a pocket," Jack overheard him say, "but we must be careful not to pass them on the trail. I've got them now!" And in this ejaculation the boy thought he detected a note of fierce joy, and became still more eager to know his leader's real mission.

He again approached Mason on the subject, but the trailer was as impassive as ever. "Don't get too curious, young fellow," he said. "Whatever the Colonel has on hand is his own affair. Let's talk about the trail. It seems, according to what the Colonel

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learned in the town, that it is four hundred miles long, and part of it has not been travelled, even by the Indians, for twenty years. I reckon we are in for a sweet and lovely month of it. You'll be sure enough season-checked by the time you get through. Your own mother wouldn't know you."

Jack was not daunted by this news. He had a boy's love of struggle, of heroism, and the thought of being thirty days more dragging up cinches had a certain attraction. "All right. I can stand it if you can!" he cried, in boyish bravado.

"Good boy!" exclaimed Mason, and added, "However, I should like to strike the game country pretty soon. I want to see one of those twelve-foot bears they've told us of. I want to see a wild animal now and then. I never was in such a country. Seems like nothing can stand the mosquitoes but the grouse."

As they were turning in that night the Colonel said, with quiet grimness, "We travel to-morrow, boys, rain or shine." And with these words his eyes emitted a wolfish gleam.

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Jack began to fear that the purpose which animated him was becoming the fixed idea of the monomaniac. He really seemed insanelly persistent.

It was still raining when they woke, but they broke camp and started to climb the big green divide which lay to the east. That ride tried the boy's resolution as well as his physical endurance. To penetrate the willows of the trail was like swimming in a sea of green water, and the tall witch-hazels slashed gallons of water over both horse and rider.

The trail "side-stepped," as Mason said, up a high ridge whose summit was lost in obscurity. Up and up, across mad little streams, over logs and roots, up into the vast tracts of fire-devastated firs, up beyond grass, beyond green, up where only ferns and leek-like plants grew, and where no bird uttered voice. It seemed impossible that but a few hours before they had passed that sunny meadow on the Kispyox.

Hour after hour they rode on, the horses striding over fallen tree-trunks, sprawling

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over stones, slipping over snarled and snake-like roots, bitten by the mosquitoes, and wet to the bone. They slid down dangerous slopes of slate and lunged through sinks of vegetable mould, which threatened to engulf them. The forest was mockingly green, but as night fell it seemed more pitiless than the sky.

After sixteen hours of desperate riding, just as the desolate night was falling, the Colonel led the way down upon a little boggy lake, round which a fringe of grass grew, and Jack slipped from his horse, so stiff that he could hardly stand.

Wet and shivering, he could not permit his companions to charge him with being worn out; therefore he resolutely set about building his fire and cooking supper, while the faithful horses perilously walked the bog, gnawing at every bare tuft of sod to appease their hunger.

This was the beginning of their acquaintance with the Skeena valley. For eight days, with scarcely a moment's resting space, under this dripping, gloomy sky, through this sod-

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den, sunless forest of firs, where only writhing, diabolic shrubs and poisonous plants grew, they drove desperately, their clothing wet, their limbs stiff and sore, their horses growing each day more gaunt and weak.

Every hour on the trail was torture to man and to beast, but the Colonel plodded on in dogged silence, in a land empty of every living thing but toads. No insect sang, no bird uttered a cry, and no beast was seen to move. Only Mason lifted a cheerful voice as he urged his tired, stumbling horses through an endless succession of morasses. Jack began to consider his leader as bitter, as silent, and as merciless as the forest.

One night the horses, cold and thin of blood, came to the fire and shared it with their masters, standing so close that the flame tingled upon their noses. They fell sick of poisonous weeds which their hunger forced them to feed upon. One of them sank in a slough and could not rise; another stopped rigid and quivering in the trail, and fell dead. Jack's own horse was seized with a kind of spasm in his throat. Each day the

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bones of the animals showed more plainly, but the Colonel halted only when it was absolutely necessary to sustain their lives. His care of them was not pity; it was only a kind of policy. He had need of them.

During this terrible passage of the forest Jack would have lost heart altogether had it not been for Mason, who was as tender of him as an elder brother. The boy's heart went out to him as to no other man he had ever known, except his own father. At times, when the Colonel was out of ear-shot, the trailer came to the fire, and while Jack was cooking, talked of the day's travel, always in his slow, humorous way, as if intending to cheer him up.

"Son, you're all right! You can have a certificate from me any day, but I reckon all the same you wish you hadn't tied up to this outfit. Now don't you blame me. I tell you right now if I had known the Colonel was so near locoed I wouldn't have come. Seems like his whole mind is bent on riding alongside of these parties ahead. It's not human, the way he's going on."

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This was the plainest word Mason had permitted himself to speak of his leader's characteristics, and the two young men looked at each other with sympathy. From that time the trailer's quaint phraseology and the kindly light of his eyes came often to help Jack endure the silence of the forest and the gloom of his leader's presence. Mason went farther by sharing the task of procuring dry wood for his fire, and by many other little services, which, not much in themselves, showed a constant, protecting care.

When things were at their worst Mason was cheeriest, and Jack himself could see that the Colonel's nerves were beginning to play him tricks. He was growing fiercely irritable.

Each night, as the boy looked back at the day's travel, his heart contracted with fear. He saw horses swimming broad, swift streams, their eyes dilated and anxious, their nostrils blown like trumpets, their bony bodies low in the water. He saw them jerked through mountain torrents, now lost to sight, now rolling like barrels, saved only by the lead-

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ropes. He walked with them on dangerous bridges, or descended steep banks in the pitfalls of mud through which they moved with groaning sighs of pain. Their bones seemed to grow more prominent every hour, till Mason said to them: "The Lord forgive us for bringing you into this infernal country!"

The Colonel had another excuse now with which to reinforce his dark purpose. The provisions were wasting away, and progress was slower and slower day by day. They were now so far ahead of the gold-seekers that their work as road-makers and bridge-builders grew more onerous. They toiled all day to go ten or twelve miles, and Mason privately said to Jack.

"Those embezzlers ahead are sure all-right trailers. We don't gain an inch on them. It looks owly now, this trail does, but I reckon we can go where the rest of 'em can."

He had fallen into the habit now of alluding to the men ahead as counterfeiters, murderers, or embezzlers, on the theory that they were fleeing from justice, and that the Colonel was an officer in pursuit of them.

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The streams were too cold and barren to feed fish, and as there were neither berries nor roots, the few gold-seekers they overtook were very gloomy, and some of them were weak for lack of food. No one knew the direction in which they were going, and those who had passed on had left no word or sign of cheer. Only one thing remained to do, and that was to follow the blazed tree-trunks, no matter where they led.

During these days Jack's gold-fever ebbed. He desired now only to escape from this imprisoning forest. He felt now that he could return without being shamefaced. No one could laugh at him for a tenderfoot after having made this journey. To have turned back at the Forks of the Skeena would have been weakness; to turn back from the Stikeen would be accounted discretion.

"We may be crossing gold-streams every day," said Mason, "but if they were paved with dust the Colonel wouldn't let us stop and sieve it up."

IX

A RACE WITH THE WOLF

ONE night as they were in camp, nursing a sick horse, two young fellows with packs on their backs, with a couple of big dogs accompanying them, stopped a moment in passing to discuss the trail. They had left their outfits some miles back, and were going on afoot to spy out the land from the big range of naked peaks to the north. They were vigorous young fellows, unawed by the wilderness and unafraid of anything.

One of them was from Ottawa, a barrister, he called himself, and the other was an instructor in a school somewhere in western Canada. They were ragged and weather-worn, but handsome fellows for all that, and their pleasant half-hour of chat relieved the tension greatly.

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It was curious to see how quickly they turned from the Colonel to Mason, and how their respect for him deepened as they talked of the trail and the wilderness. They drew from him more in half an hour than Jack had been able to learn in weeks, for they had the Yankee's habit of asking questions. Moreover, they had been over the same trails in Montana, and had met one or two of the trailer's friends. When they took up their packs and started away with their big dogs, Mason turned to the boy and said, "Those lads are sure thoroughbreds."

After three days' toil over the worst footing they had yet seen, the little train of horses came out into the sunlight above the forest, up where the snows were, and the boy's heart leaped with exultation for the first time since leaving Quesnelle. Around him the marmots whistled like roguish boys, and porcupines galloped recklessly over the rocks. For the first time in two weeks he was able to look afar over the forest and see the coast range shining in beauty.

The short grass was warm with sun, and

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the horses fell upon it greedily. It was like an escape from enclosing walls to be able to sit there and look down upon the forest from which they had emerged. Jack longed to follow this high road. Its cold winds, its ice and snow were much less terrifying than the swamps and the green darkness through which they had come. Man took on something of the mountain's altitude and serenity, seemed less helpless, less of the mere insect, and yet for hundreds of miles in every direction the wild mountains rolled against the sky with no hint of humankind.

Mason seemed interested only in the game round him, and beating up the bushes for ptarmigan, secured three fine birds, which Jack broiled for supper. With unexpected and somewhat startling cheerfulness the Colonel said:

"These go well with the landscape. They're well cooked." And then he added: "Boys, it's been a hard trail, but I reckon this is the divide between the Skeena and the Stikeen. We'll find it drier on that side."

Jack ventured to say: "We thought we'd left the Skeena two or three times before."

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The Colonel smiled. "You thought so, but I did not. No, we had to cross a snowy divide; this is it. The Stikeen water-shed begins within half a mile of where we sit."

It was bitter cold up there, and as the camp was at timber-line, wood was scarce; so, gorged with delicious meat, they all went early to bed, Jack lighter of heart than he had been for weeks.

And it was very sweet to the boy to open his eyes to the sunlight the next morning. The sky was dazzlingly clear, and the line of great peaks to the west glowed with unearthly splendor. Frost lay on the grass, and the horses, humped and shivering, were all standing broadside to the sun. There was something thrilling, something epic in the thought that only the unbroken wilderness lay for hundreds of miles on every side.

Jack was cooking breakfast when the two young Canadians came striding back down the mountain, cheery as marmots, tireless as their big dogs, who carried their loads sedately, but with undiminished vigor.

The Colonel hailed them, inviting them to



“DID YOU SEE TWO MEN WITH THREE BALD-FACED
SORREL HORSES AMONG THEM?”

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breakfast. "You're the first white men we've *met* on the trail. All others have been going in our direction." During the meal he plied them with questions. They had been down to a big river some thirty miles to the north. "We think it is the Skeena," they said.

Jack's heart sank. "The Skeena? Then we're still in this awful valley?"

"That's what it looks like."

"What makes you think so?" asked Mason.

"Because the water is running to the right. The Stikeen should run to the west."

"Any outfits ahead?" asked the Colonel.

"Yes, there are three used-up parties camped on the bank of this river, waiting for help. They're out of food and badly disheartened."

With a studied calmness, but with a mounting excitement perceptible to Jack, the Colonel asked his oft-repeated question: "Did you see two men with three bald-faced sorrel horses among them?"

"Yes, we camped with them night before last."

A baleful fire lighted the Colonel's eyes, but

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his voice remained indifferent. "Were they in good condition, or pretty well used up?"

"Why, I think they are rather better off than most of the others. Of course they look rough and thin. We all do that, but they still had three horses in good condition, and they seemed to know their business."

"They do that," muttered the Colonel.

"Friends of yours?" asked the Ottawa man.

The Colonel looked up and replied with a casual glance, "Well, no, they're just some fellows I knew back in the States. How far ahead did you say they were?"

"They crossed the river last night. They're possibly forty-five miles ahead."

With this answer the Colonel seemed to have gained all the information he wanted, and so turned away. Soon after the young fellows said good-bye, and went striding down the slope as gay as if they were out on a little fishing-trip in the woods of their native land.

Jack took the opportunity to say to Mason: "Do you suppose the men ahead have any idea the Colonel's after them?"

"No, I don't think they have. I reckon they

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are just boiling along the way we are, anxious to get out of this fly-bit country. You see, if they knew, it would be easy for them to side-step into the brush and let us go by, and I reckon that's the reason the Colonel is so mighty close-mouthed about what they are and what he intends to do with them. If I was in their place, I'd trade off those bald-faced sorrels and make a raft and take to the first river I found. It looks as if the old man has it in for them, and if they've done him somewhere back in the States, there's likely to be blood on the moss when we overtake them."

As they topped the divide the next day a great rain-cloud was roaring behind them, checked by the peaks like a baffled beast of prey. It beat itself upon the rocks while the horses, comparatively in shelter, dropped rapidly into a land perceptibly drier and gentler.

After some hours of rapid going, Jack was gladdened to see the roses once more, and towards night the trail descended to a little prairie on the bank of a small stream, which

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looked so much like the verdure of his own native State that he longed to dismount and throw himself upon its sunny grasses. This, too, passed, this dry, rose-decked country, and the trail began to mount again, climbing back into the barren, empty land.

On the second day they came out on the banks of a broad, swift river, where a half-dozen ragged, disheartened gold-hunters were in camp, nursing their horses and waiting for some one to overtake them. They needed food, and some of them needed clothing. Beside their destitution the Colonel's rations seemed plenty; but he rode past them without stopping, and Jack's heart ached to see the look of despair which came on the faces of those who asked him for help.

"It has become a race with the wolf," the Colonel explained. "We can't spare a pound of meat or flour. It's every man for himself now."

For the first time Mason uttered a protest. "Colonel, your method is all wrong. We should have spent a couple of days back there in the ptarmigan country, killing

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and salting down meat. This way of rushing through a wilderness is unprofessional. You've got to take time if you're going to live off the country, and that's what we've got to do pretty soon."

To this the Colonel made no reply whatever.

To Jack the trailer said: "It just 'pears like the old man expects to pick those fellows' bones when he overtakes them. This is no way to do. You'd think they'd lifted his smoke-house from the way he goes after them, grub or no grub."

The Colonel's passion, now that he was close to his prey, broke from its iron restraint. He cried out against the mud and the glacial water which carried every stream over its banks. He ordered his subordinates from their saddles, and directed that the packs be distributed so that the horses could be rushed forward.

Mason remarked: "All right, Colonel, but I'm no hobo. Walking is not what I'm built for. A cow-man walking is like a dog turning handsprings—amusing, but not according to nature."

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That night the Colonel talked openly with Mason about losing his men. "If they get in ahead of us in time to take a boat to the coast, they will certainly escape. I might not know them in a crowd of miners. But they sha'n't get in!" he growled, with a ferocious note in his voice. "I've lived for nothing else for six months, and they're mine!" He threw out his big right hand and clutched the air like a tiger.

"They must have done you great wrong," Jack foolishly ventured to say.

He faced Jack with a blaze in his eyes which scared him. He seemed on the point of uttering some revealing word, but with visible effort regained control of himself. "Oh no, they never wronged me," he said, carelessly.

X

THE COLONEL DESERTS HIS TRAIN

THERE came a day when every ill thing seemed to assemble like vultures to do the faithful horses harm. A sort of hoof-rot broke out among them. The grass was scanty, cold, and watery; rain was upon their backs. The men were stiff and sore from "bushing in" a long slough, and as a most terrifying climax, Jack shook the last ounce of flour into the pan.

"Colonel," he said, "we have nothing left to eat except a few beans and some coffee."

Jack fully expected his leader to rage, but the Colonel only said, very quietly, "I've been watching you," and walked aside with Mason to talk.

Jack perceived that they considered the situation too serious to discuss in his presence.

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He went to bed that night filled with a conviction that they were desirous of ridding themselves of him. He broke out in a cold sweat every time he thought of being left alone in that terrible wilderness; but Mason soon returned to say, "It's all right, lad. Don't worry. I'll put you through." And the boy's tears fell away.

He was awakened the next morning by a pistol-shot. Springing to his feet, he looked from the tent-door just in time to see one of the horses—poor faithful old Pete—reel and fall with a bullet in his head. The others snorted and struggled at their tethers, as if they feared a like fate, but only one other, a roan, with a disabled pastern-joint, met death at this time.

Jack soon saw that the manner of their advance was about to change. From his own horse, a noble animal, the Colonel stripped the saddle, a heavy, cruel thing, and threw it under a tree. His tent and all extra clothing followed it.

"We travel light to-day," he said.

Mason packed his saddle-horse with the

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little food that was left, together with his tent-cloth and such bedding as seemed absolutely essential. Then turning to Jack, he said:

"Boy, you're a light weight; you can keep your saddle and ride. You can shift to the extra horse if you can hold him in the bunch, but don't fall behind," he said, warningly.

"Line up!" called the Colonel; and he led the way into the forest.

Driving the two pack-horses before him, Mason followed, and Jack, with his extra horse before him, brought up the rear. He understood now that he was facing the wildest wilderness in a cold, wet, and bitter country, with only a tent-cloth, a blanket, and a few pounds of food; and he realized also that, so far as the Colonel was concerned, he was abandoned to his own resources. "I *must* keep up now!" he said, knowing that his very life depended upon Mason's help.

They pushed on steadily and at greatly increased speed. The Colonel seemed a man of iron, but Mason easily kept pace, and with many a backward glance assured himself of

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the boy's safe progress. They slid down grassy slopes and toiled up rocky hills with no apparent diminution of speed.

To save his horse, the boy walked as often as he felt able; but one of his boots, turning at the heel, tortured him, and Mason, observing his limp, called back, "Stick to your saddle, boy!

"We're within seventy miles of the river," he explained later. "That's why we're pushing so hard. We must make thirty-five miles to-day and as many more to-morrow—unless we overtake our men, which I think we shall do. The Colonel figures they've lost all their horses but one, and are afoot, too. You'd better ride as long as you can."

Jack's ankle pained him terribly and he was dizzy for lack of food, but he could not make complaint so long as he was mounted and his companions were not.

They stopped at noon in a thicket of juicy bunch-grass, and Mason brought wood for the fire while Jack got out the coffee and sugar and a few scraps of bread.

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"Save the beans," commanded the Colonel.
"We'll need them to-morrow."

He was strangely elated, and as he sipped his coffee he talked—talked as he had never talked in all their long journey. "We'll overhaul them to-night—I feel it in my bones. They are both good trailers, I grant that, but they're mine! They can't escape. If we don't overhaul 'em by sunset to-night, I shall leave you to come on alone. My little justice court must take place before we reach the camp on the third fork. And now that we are nearly in, and as you may be witnesses of my meeting with these robbers, I want to tell you why I want them. They were partners with my brother on a ranch in Colorado. They murdered him and took every cent he had, and joined this rush, thinking to lose themselves." Here a smile that terrified Jack lifted the corners of the man's lips. "But they reckoned without me. The sheriff deputized me to hunt 'em down, and I'll do it if it takes a lifetime."

He must have seen the horror in Jack's eyes, for after a moment he added, "I am a

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peaceable man, my boy, though you may not think it. I have never harmed a man in my life, but I loved this brother; he was all I had in the world—one of these truthful, easy-going souls that the world misuses—and he left a sweet wife—”

He stopped here, and rose and walked away into the thicket to recover control of himself. Mason looked at Jack significantly. “I guess we’ve got the rights of the case now. You can’t blame the old man for feeling dark red, can you? I thought there must be some personal reason for his hurry.”

“How do we know his story is true?” asked Jack. “Even if he is an officer, he has no right to kill them, has he?”

“We’re a long way from Denver, and a good deal farther from Berryville, and you must bear in mind that the Colonel is the responsible party. So long as I can keep clear of the scrap, I don’t propose to mix in. We’ll have troubles of our own before we pull into Glenora.”

As night came on, Jack began to be more concerned about food and lodging than with

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the Colonel's vengeance—so coercive is nature to one of slender physical resource. As the stimulation of the coffee passed out of his brain, his awe of the mighty and inexorable wilderness came back upon him, overwhelming him, benumbing him. What motes men were in the midst of it all! He marvelled that the spirit of revenge could so persist in the face of the awful silence and amid these vast spaces where the wars of nations were of no more concern than the birth and death of crickets.

Spreading their tent-cloth, they crept beneath it and tried to sleep. As the night deepened, the cold air nipped keenly, but the frost had this virtue—it silenced the mosquitoes; and at last Jack dropped into sorely needed sleep.

When he awoke, Mason sat beside the renewed fire. Catching Jack's eye, he remarked, casually: "Well, youngster, it's you and me now, I reckon."

"What do you mean?" asked Jack, struggling to rise, so stiff and lame that he could hardly move. "Where is the Colonel?"

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"He took his gun and my horse and left us about daybreak. Said he had a little business up-trail, and couldn't wait for us. He'll meet us somewhere between here and the third fork."

There was something terrifying in Mason's calm announcement, and he must have divined the lad's thought, for he added:

"Now don't you worry, son; I'm going to stay by you till we get in, if it takes till next Christmas. These beans are good for three days' strain—if we use 'em right; and if the old man doesn't meet us, we may strike some other outfit with a handful of flour to spare, or I may get a deer. There must be game in this country, if we take time to look for it."

Jack's hand went out in love and trust to meet the palm of this indomitable trailer, on whom he had no claim beyond that of a chance partnership on the road. And in this moment he suddenly observed how gaunt and shaggy and weather-beaten his friend had become. "Will this forest never end?" he fiercely cried.

"I'm afraid this formation covers the whole

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Northwest," Mason answered. "The open country holds the game, but we may catch a grouse any time. No living thing must get by us. I'm boss from this on, and if we don't live off the country it'll be the fault of the climate."

So far from being weakened by this desertion on the part of their leader, Jack acknowledged a feeling of relief. They drank the soup from their beans, and Mason carefully divided the solid matter of the contents of the pot into six parts. One of these parts he ate slowly, telling Jack to do the same. "Make it go as far as you can, my boy," he said.

Coffee they had in abundance, and they finished their breakfast by taking deep draughts of the powerful liquid, which seemed to drive some of the ache from their bones.

Mason now led the way, and Jack, abandoning one of his horses to follow if he saw fit, started afoot, keeping close to the heels of the pack-horse Billy, who carried nothing now but their scant bedding and the coffee-pot.

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The trail bore away to the northeast, over low, heavily wooded ridges, and at no point offered a view of the country. Mason admitted that he was "going it blind," but the sun shone and the air seemed drier. In these changes was encouragement, although the signs of travel were now quite dim. Only one or two outfits were ahead of them, and the trail was broken by deep gullies and by marshy spots.

"The old man is running desperate," remarked the trailer, as they descended a large ridge. "He had old Baldy on the lope here. He's footing the bad spots and slamming the horse through on the easy places." A look of sadness came over his face. "I reckon this will finish old Baldy; he can't stand this pace more than one day, and if the Colonel is off on his calculations, he'll be set afoot before sundown."

Jack had a vision of that wild, plunging gallop down the marshy slope of the mountain. A feeling of repulsion towards the Colonel, keener than anything he had yet experienced, rose within him. Old Baldy had

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been so gentle, so faithful, through their long journey.

At noon they ate another portion of their bean mush and drank deeply of their coffee, while their ponies fed on a few bunches of tall joint-grass, growing among a tangle of fallen tree-trunks. Suddenly Mason's eye took note of something moving on the trail. Leaping to his feet, he bent to peer up the path under the firs.

"Here comes some one!" he exclaimed.

"The Colonel?" inquired Jack.

"No, it isn't the Colonel. It may be an Indian. No, it's a white man."

Jack stepped out into the trail and watched the stranger, who was coming on in a reeling trot. His eyes were on the ground, and he did not see Mason till he called out:

"Hello, stranger! Where are you bound?"

At sound of his voice the man looked up, and into his haggard, hopeless face a light came. With mouth held open, as if breathless with joy, he staggered up and hoarsely whispered, "Say, have you any grub? Give me some grub. I'm starving! Don't say

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you haven't any!" he added, fiercely. "You've *got* to have some!"

He made a clutch at Mason's breast. The trailer caught him by the wrist, and said: "Easy now, pard! We're down to our last mouthful ourselves, and just about as hungry as you are, but we'll do the best we can for you." The man dropped his hand, and Mason said: "Jack, give him a little coffee."

As Jack filled the cup and handed it to the stranger, who gulped it greedily, Mason asked: "Did you see any game as you came along?"

A cunning look came into the stranger's narrowed eyes. "I saw a grouse down there."

Mason straightened up. "Why didn't you kill it?"

"Didn't have any gun. My partner took my gun. Give me a little grub and I'll show you where I saw the bird."

"I believe he's lying," said Mason, as openly as if the man were stone-deaf. "But I'll chance my own supper on him." Thereupon he gave the stranger a few mouthfuls of the

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porridge. "Now eat slow, and tell us all about it."

The fellow bolted the food in silence, like a starving wolf, and while he ate, Mason and the boy studied him. He was an ill-looking fellow, and when he ended by wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, Jack was quite as prejudiced against him as Mason himself. The stranger's eyes roamed about, as if seeking for more food, and he looked often up the trail behind him. After a little he told his story:

"You see, it's like this. Three nights ago my partner pulled out while I was asleep, taking the best horse and all the grub. I followed along as hard as I could till my own cayuse fell down, and then I just turned in my tracks. I says, 'I'm going back. I'm going to hit the back trail. I'll meet some other outfit quicker by doing that than by going ahead.' You're the first I've seen."

"That partner of yours must be a good one," said Mason.

The man broke into a frenzy of hate. "I'll

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do him when I see him! He's nothing but a thief and a coward. I'll kill him!"

Mason stopped him. "Well, now let's go get that grouse. You're obliged to make good about that bird, my friend, or you can't trot along with us."

Jack did not think the fellow had seen a grouse, but a few moments later the sound of Mason's revolver thrilled his heart with a promise of food, for he knew how unerring that weapon was in the trailer's hand. The stranger exclaimed: "Now, did I lie to you? Didn't I tell you there was a bird?"

Mason continued to beat up the thicket for half an hour, but found nothing more, and they all pushed on, highly elated by the change in the trail, which was becoming drier each mile.

Towards the middle of the afternoon they came upon a few strawberries on a sunny slope of the river-bank, and Jack snatched a few as he passed. Their savor carried him back to his home and his mother, and it was well that he was out of sight of his leader, for his eyes were misted with tears.

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The crack of Mason's pistol announced the bagging of another grouse, and he came out of the wood holding it high in his hand. "That makes us good for fifty miles of travel," said he. "This saves our lives." And the boy's heart threw off its gloom.

They marched as long as they felt their horses would stagger, and went into camp in a really beautiful spot on the bank of the river, which still persisted in running the wrong way, rushing ever towards the heart of the great Hudson Bay wilderness.

As Jack was broiling one of the birds, Mason sat by, snuffing the air. "Sakes alive, don't that smell good? Now, boys, we'll eat that one bird to-night, and we'll save our porridge for a rainy day."

At supper Mason drew from the straggler his story. He was from Idaho, he said, and had been a miner all his life. His story ended in curses directed at his faithless partner and in a kind of fawning gratitude towards Mason.

"Well, now," said the trailer, "I never desert a man on the trail, and if you want to

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hoof along with us we'll break even in whatever comes, but I don't want to have your clack running all the time. You'd better save your breath. You'll need it when you run up against that side-partner of yours. This boy and me, we're quiet people, but a little bit nervous just now. We admire a man who stops talking once in a while."

The truth was, he already despised the fellow and considered him a braggart. He took the precaution before he lay down to sleep to put all their food under his own pillow, and examined his revolver rather ostentatiously in the presence of the stranger. "I take no chances on losing this bird," he whispered to Jack.

XI

MASON PREVENTS MURDER

IT now seemed to Jack Henderson as if they were plunging recklessly into ever-deepening mystery, and every night seemed more hopelessly dark and chill. The summer seemed near its end, but Mason spoke confidently of what they would be able to do on the morrow. His spirits seldom rose or fell. He accepted whatever came, with the philosophic calm of an Indian.

It must have been on the third day—although Jack became a little confused as to time as well as to place—when they came upon the Colonel, sitting beside the trail on a grassy bank. Mason was leading his horse, Jack was close behind, but the foot-passenger had dropped out of sight.

Their former chief, haggard and gaunt,

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looked up with a curious, almost apologetic smile, and said, very quietly, "Well, lads, I'm done. All in but my shoestrings. Have you a crumb left?"

"Well, I reckon," Mason heartily responded. "Boy, get into that grub-box, bring out that baked chicken and cranberry-sauce."

The starving man seized the piece of grouse, but was too experienced in such matters to gulp it. He ate slowly, silently. Not till he had cracked the last bone did Mason venture to put the question which Jack was dying to ask.

"Well, did you find your man?" The trailer's tone was so careless that Jack was puzzled.

"No," responded the Colonel, speaking sadly. "He side-stepped me; must be on the back-trail somewhere. Didn't happen to see him anywhere, did you?"

Jack's heart should have frozen with sudden horror of the situation, but as a matter of fact he was too tired and too hungry even to share Mason's indignation. "Why didn't you push on instead of turning round to hunt

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down some men who may be dead already? It was your lay to string yourself out and get in and buy some grub and hit the back-trail afterwards. This boy is just about used up, and I'm beginning to feel just a little bit slab-sided myself. I'm disgusted with you."

The other man looked up with surprise at this change in his silent partner. "Oh, we're all right. We'll make the third fork to-morrow."

"I doubt it. Anyhow, we've got to hustle. We can't spend any time fooling along picking spruce-gum. Come, let's be moving."

Jack now understood Mason's plan. He knew and Jack knew that the man hobbling behind was one of the fugitives, and that the only way to save him from the avenger's wrath was to outrun him.

"No," said the Colonel, with quiet obstinacy, "I'm going to keep the back-trail till I meet my man. Don't you worry about me. I'll hold up the first outfit I meet and get some grub, and as soon as I lay that wolf away, I'll hurry after you. Ride on; never mind me."

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Mason glanced up the trail. "You needn't go any farther," he said, with a coldly resigned air. "Here comes your game."

The Colonel sprang up alert, his weariness forgotten. The transformation in him was as great as that between a tiger at play and a tiger crouched, with snarling teeth and ears laid back, ready for combat. The hate, the deadly anger blazing from his eyes, the drawn lines of his haggard face were savage—remorseless.

The whole scene suddenly defined itself to the boy's mind as if it were a painting. He saw themselves, three hairy, ragged, swarthy banditti, waiting the approach of a poor wanderer on the trail.

The man came on through the dim greenness of the forest, limping painfully, his clothes flapping round his emaciated limbs. His trousers were in rags, and with every step one bony knee was thrust to view. His left shoe had turned on his heel so far that he was fairly walking upon the upper. Nearing the group, he tried to smile ingratiatingly, and called out, "Well, lads, here I am—with

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you again! I almost thought you'd run away from me."

At this point something in the silence, the immobility of his listeners, startled him, and he stopped and stared, while Jack's heart rose into his throat with fear of what was about to happen.

Glancing from one to the other the man said, with a feeble, forced laugh, "Say, you fellers look kind of funny. What's the matter with you? You ain't crazy, are you, all standing there like that? Why don't you say something?"

The Colonel's voice, low, clear, and deadly, called out, "Steve Carrick, I want you!"

The man on the trail reeled as if he had been smitten with the fist; his face was contorted with the effort to appear calm. That he was a criminal, Jack knew. He thought he could read it in the man's eyes and hear it in his voice; but he pitied him, he was so weak and so helpless, as he bravely gasped out:

"Who are you, anyway?"

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"I am the brother of Jim Broderick," replied the Colonel.

Carrick gave such a cry as the boy had never heard before in all his life—a cry which reduced him to the level of some animal dying of fright. He fell prone on the ground, and with incoherent moans for mercy crept towards the Colonel, as a dog crushed and bleeding creeps towards an inhuman master. Nothing could have been more lamentable, more piteous.

"Mercy! Don't shoot!"

"Mercy!" repeated the Colonel, speaking through his set teeth. "Did you show mercy?" He drew his revolver. "My warrant says 'dead or alive.' If you have anything to say, say it quick."

Mason interposed a word, and Jack never heard a sweeter, more dignified voice than that of the trailer, as he said, "Hold on, Colonel; you can't afford to kill a thing like that."

The older man turned, and the fire in his eyes would have withered a timid man, but Mason was not a timid man. His left hand

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closed on the death-dealing wrist, and he laid the other upon his leader's shoulder. "Easy now, Colonel, easy!"

The Colonel's tone was not loud, but it was terrifying. "I am an officer of the law fulfilling his duty. Take your hand off me."

"In a minute," replied the young trailer, "but I want to say something to you first. I want to ask you did you travel all this long trail to kill me, your partner, at the end of it?"

The Colonel's face softened a little, but he sternly replied, "I have warned you. You mustn't get in the way of justice."

"Yes, but wait a second." Mason went on much as he would have humored a drunken man. "I want a chance to talk. If this brute was well and able to make any kind of a fight, I'd turn him over to you. But he isn't. He's a starving man. His backbone has caved in. I wouldn't shoot him now any quicker than I would kill a sick kitten. Besides, your personal feeling shouldn't come in. You have no right to cover your own revenge

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with a warrant. You haven't been quite square with me."

"Are you done?" asked the Colonel, and Jack understood that Mason's plea had failed to reach his leader's heart.

The young trailer's tone hardened; a cold and piercing light came into his eyes. "Not quite. If you shoot this man I make you the criminal. Now I'll tell you what I'll do. You say you're a deputy, with a warrant for this man. All right. I'll help you take your prisoner through to United States territory, and turn him over to the law, but I swear you sha'n't kill a starving man in my sight. It's worse than murder. You're not in your right mind or you wouldn't think of it."

"You don't know what he has done to me."

"I know you can't afford to kill this man, no matter what your personal feeling may be."

The Colonel's answer was an attempt to take his wrist from the young man's grasp. This action seemed to close the argument with Mason.

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His face hardened into lines which thrilled his boyish admirer. "See here, old man, it's you and me now. *I say you sha'n't shoot that man and I mean it.*"

They faced each other in perfect silence for a moment, and the boy could see each man calculating chances. Mason's hand was like a bracelet of bronze on the Colonel's wrist, but his right hand was free and rested upon his revolver. His was the glance that masters. So they stood, while the poor beast at their feet looked up at them with face set in an expression of mingled fear and wonder.

Then the Colonel's arm relaxed, and Mason withdrew his hand. Spurning the grovelling criminal with his foot, the Colonel snarled, "Get up!"

The young trailer drew a deep breath of relief. "You'll thank me for this some day, Colonel."

To this the chief made no reply other than to say to Carrick, "If you try to escape, you die."

"He won't run away," said Mason—"not till we get out of the wilderness."

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Jack gave up his saddle to Carrick, who was too shattered to walk, and they proceeded on their way.

The whole episode was like an evil dream to the boy. It seemed as if he must wake up soon and find himself at home in his bed under the low roof of his mother's attic. It could not be that all these happenings were real. He thought of himself and his dream and aspiration while seated in the car at St. Paul with George and Owen. He felt that he was growing old under these iron-gray skies.

That night just at sunset they emerged once more from the dreary forest—this time into a clear space on a long, rocky ridge. At last they were permitted a glimpse of the far-stretching landscape.

Mason was exultant. "There is the third fork!" he called, and pointed away across a wide and deeply wooded valley to a dark blue cleft where ran a faintly seen river. He swept his hand to the west, "And there is the coast range, boy, and the gap which the river makes in breaking through."

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Jack had no words to express the joy, the elation, the sense of gratitude with which that glorious rampart of peaks filled him. He no longer dreamed of gold; he dreamed of escape. The happiest fortune in the world at that moment would have been a berth on a ship sailing southward towards his home.

Meanwhile his companions were talking quietly. "We can go in to-night if we can keep the trail," said the Colonel.

"There's no moon," replied Mason, "and it's a good deal longer across the valley than it looks, and it's swampy, besides."

To Jack the landscape was fair, the forest below a carpet, and all their toil and danger fairly ended. A fresh, amiable western wind was blowing; the sky was filled with glowing clouds, and it seemed that they might leap down upon the valley beneath and traverse it as if it were a velvet robe.

But all this was delusive. Mason, a practised trailer, was right. Beneath the blue mist of distance were savage cañons, impassable as gates of bronze, moats filled with rushing, ice-cold water. Concealed by that

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carpet of fir-branches lurked a thousand bog-holes, while impenetrable thickets of elders and willows lay in wait for them. The mountains were cold and silent, and winter, swift in his southern flight as a swan, seemed about to shadow the world.

XII

THE DEATH OF CARRICK

THEY camped that night on the bank of a swift and powerful stream, which Mason called the second fork. They were now so weak and disheartened that this river, which fell away into a monstrous gorge below them, was terrifying. Not one drop of this water was at rest. It resembled a mighty mill-race. However, another outfit had crossed before them, leaving directions pencilled on a tree for those to follow.

"We will cache our canoe on the willows on the other side," they had written on a big chip. So Mason said, "I'll ride across and get the boat, but I think we'd better camp here till morning."

They passed a miserable night, but they still had a little grouse and some salt, so that

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each had at least a morsel of food. Very little was said; it was a question of enduring the slow passage of the hours. To Jack the roaring of that stream had all the quality of the voice of a beast of prey. It was not so wide a stream as some of those he had crossed, but here they were thrown upon their own resources, and neither of them knew much about handling a boat.

The Colonel kept a watchful eye on his captive, and once Jack heard him say, "If you make a motion to escape, you die."

Jack despised the man, he was so abject, so nervous, but nevertheless he pitied him, for when Mason, in the early morning, left them to ride the horse across the stream to bring back the canoe, Carrick fell into a panic. Perhaps he expected to be killed: but the Colonel seemed quite unconscious of his nervousness, and watched with great anxiety Mason's attempt to swim the river.

The boy's sympathies went out to the horse which the trailer was forcing into the water from a bar high up-stream, in order to allow for his drift down the current. It did not

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seem possible for him to reach the other shore, and the boy knew perfectly well that his hero was risking his life for his fellows.

The crossing was indeed a struggle. Down, down, went the faithful horse, till only his nose could be seen, while his rider, dismounted and floating by his side, was entirely lost to view.

Jack, tense with anxiety, thought the Colonel singularly indifferent, for he uttered no word of comment, no shout of encouragement. Whether this arose from weariness or from his faith in Mason's skill, the boy could not determine, but it hurt him.

At last, with a brave halloo, the trailer couched bottom, and the exhausted horse crawled slowly up the bank, weary and glistening with the water.

Taking his lesson from the Indians, Mason paddled the canoe far up the stream, keeping close to the bank, and then turning suddenly, bent furiously to his paddle, and came shooting diagonally across, the boat dancing high on the waters, running sidewise like a pitching bronco. In a few seconds the run

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was over and the boat beached safely at his partner's feet. Stepping out, he coolly said:

"Now, boy, I'll take you and the plunder over first."

Carrick's face was white with fear. "Oh no, no, no! Don't leave me!" he pleaded. "He'll kill me if you leave me!"

"No, he won't," replied Mason, confidently. "He's given his word and he'll keep it. Get in, boy."

Jack was of no use whatever in the crossing. As he looked down into the swift, gray stream, and listened to the thunder of the fall below him, he grew rigid with fear, but Mason bent to his rude paddle with a shout in imitation of the red boatmen; his spirit was unconquerable. "I'm no canoeist," he said. "I'm a bronco-buster. But a canoe is a kind of bronco, anyway, and I win out."

He did. They landed without mishap, and leaving Jack, he returned to fetch the Colonel, who, taking his seat in the canoe, forced Carrick to help drive Jack's horses from the sand-bar into the water. This trip was more difficult than either of the others,

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and when they landed, Mason showed signs of great weariness. His chest heaved with his tremendous exertions and the sweat lay in huge drops on his brown face.

"If I'd only been reinforced with a bird!" he said. "Well, now that you're both over here, I want to tell you that I found a notice with this canoe which warned me to be careful. The cañon below here is fifteen miles long and filled with rapids. No man has ever gone through it alive. However, I'm going to make one more trip for our friend over there."

"No, you're not," said the Colonel, rousing up. "I will not permit you to risk your life for such a hound. I'm going to pot him with my rifle."

"No, you don't," said Mason. "I promised that chap I'd come back and get him, and I'm going to do it."

"But the man is a robber and a murderer. You must not risk your life for him. I'll not have it. He isn't worth it. I'll fix him so he won't be worth your trip." He caught up his rifle, which lay near. "As sure as you start over I will kill him."

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Mason interposed: "Now see here, Colonel; it's your word against mine. You promised—"

"Where is the wolf?" asked the other man, searching the shore with flaming eyes. "He's gone!" His voice rose in a fury of rage as he scrutinized the bank, his rifle ready. "I told you to take him. Now he's escaped us both. You said he wouldn't run, but he has."

"Put down your gun," said Mason, as he took up his paddle. "He can't get away. I'll bring him."

"There he is!" cried Jack. "He's found another canoe."

"Sure thing!" exclaimed Mason. "He's going to come across alone and save me a trip."

With only a small pole in his hand, Carrick was indeed shoving out into the river, and as the current caught him and he began to spin about, he faced his former captors, uttering a defiant cry.

"He's going down the river!" growled the Colonel. "He's escaping."

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"Not by that road," Mason quietly responded. "He's signed his own death-warrant."

At that instant the Colonel threw his rifle to his shoulder to fire, but Mason pushed it aside and the bullet went wild.

Turning fiercely upon him, the Colonel shouted, "What do you mean? Don't you see he's getting away?" And with a warning glare in his eyes, he again raised the rifle.

Mason took hold of the gun-barrel. "You don't need to do that, Colonel; he's as good as hanged this minute. He's on the edge of the first fall."

"I take no chances," the avenger grimly replied; but even as he spoke, the fugitive, with a scornful gesture, dropped to the bottom of the boat, which had already entered the rapids and was rushing to certain destruction. Even as they looked, the little vessel, dancing like a leaf, shot against a huge rock, turned completely over, and in an instant was swallowed up by the angry flood.

The Colonel lowered his rifle and stood in silence for a long time pondering with eyes on the river.

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At last he turned. "Well, that ends my job. Now, Mason, it's up to you and me to get in with this boy. He's stood this trip like a veteran, but I can see he needs all the help we can give him."

XIII

THE END OF THE TRAIL

AS long as he lives, Jack will remember the flush of joy which came into his heart as he heard Mason cheerily shout, "Here we are! Saved at twelve!"

The boy was behind, riding his poor tired horse, and for a moment could detect no sign of hope, no cause for Mason's shout. Then he saw the Colonel stoop and pick up a muddy newspaper, while Mason pointed triumphantly at a beer keg. "The sure sign of civilization," said he, ironically. "We can't be many miles from a town and a steamboat."

They were a sorry-looking group as they stood there. Their cheek-bones showed strongly, their clothing was torn and faded. Their ears were swollen with the poison of

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insects, and their hair was long and matted. The Colonel was especially emaciated and weak. His hands trembled as he tried to read the newspaper.

With a few words they discussed probabilities, and then Mason set off, followed by his two horses. The Colonel came next, and Jack and his pony followed. He had walked part of the time, but was now so weak that he dared not release his hold on the lead-rope, and on the up-grades he held to the pony's tail, and so managed to keep pace. Mason had an eye on him, however, and no brother could have been more tender.

The trail descended sharply into an ever-thickening forest. Herds of worn horses appeared grazing on the scant herbage, and at last they caught sight of a great, gray, rushing river, then of a row of faded tents along a well-worn path. They had reached the end of "the Long Trail"!

Across on the western bank a few rough shanties were visible. These were the stores of Telegraph Creek, the town they had sought so long. After eighty days in the wilderness,

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they were still two hundred miles from Teslin Lake. Jack's provisions were gone, his money much depleted, the question of his future undetermined, but his joy over the sight of a house filled his mind to the exclusion of all else.

The outfits camped on the bank soon put Mason in possession of the desperate situation. This *was* the Stikeen, but the water was so high and so swift that to ford it was impossible, and the trailers were all waiting for some one to come from the other shore to take them across. Most of them were without provisions, and all were gloomy and discouraged. Jack, hungry as he was, pitied some of these poor fellows, for they were thinner and hungrier than he.

Mason turned to his boyish partner. "Jack, you've stood it like a Piute," he said, "and if there's any grub to be had in this camp you'll share it," and with a word of similar encouragement to the Colonel, he went among the camps in search of food.

The older man was actually staggering with weakness. Nevertheless he slipped the

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saddles from the horses, while Jack began almost mechanically to build a fire, pausing sometimes to look across the river at the village, hungrily thinking of the savory biscuit and bacon to be had there. He had nothing to cook, but he did not despair, and the fire was built.

Mason came back more disturbed than he had been in all their trip. "Not a scrap of grub to be had without holding somebody up for it. Looks like we'll have to go into camp and eat roots like the rest."

Somehow, Mason was always able to put heart into the boy, and faint and nerveless as he was, Jack smiled. "I'll boil our flour-sack; there may be a little flour in it. We've got some coffee, anyhow, and some sugar."

"Hello!" said Mason. "I forgot about that. Watch me make a trade! Men will swap when they won't sell," and taking some sugar and coffee, he hurried away.

Jack set the coffee-pot on, for the wind was growing cold and a warm drink was better than nothing.

Mason reappeared, holding high a big lump

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of "kettle bread" and a small piece of bacon. "We're made, partners!" he shouted. "I found a fellow who needed coffee worse than he needed bread. Now, Jacky, I'm cook to-night. You look used up," and with a command to his partners to keep out of the way, the indomitable trailer set to work to toast the bread and broil the bacon.

As he worked about the fire, Jack studied Mason, observing how bony and haggard he had become. He had grown a long, ragged beard, his trousers were worn to the knees and flapped about his legs, his shoe soles were tied on with strings. He had walked every foot of the last two hundred miles. Iron and bronze as he was, he showed this wear. He had assumed the brunt of everything with a word of cheery defiance of every danger.

Ah, how sweet was the smell of the bacon to the boy, and the coffee! And when they munched their crusts—the first crumb of bread for nearly a week—they looked at each other from eyes swimming with tears of satisfaction.

"This gold-hunting," remarked Mason,

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"isn't my kind of work. I never was afoot before, and I don't intend to be again. I wouldn't mind hunting gold if I could rope it."

As the night fell, most of the prospectors drew together at one big camp-fire and talked of the terrible sloughs and streams over which they had passed. Others built signal-fires and waved blazing brands as signals to the men of the town near the river, firing guns at intervals to convey their message of distress.

Mason and Jack went down to them, and the trailer said, "No use; we're here till morning, sure. No man will cross that river to-night." Nevertheless they kept on with their appeals.

It was a wild and savage flood that night, and its voice, mingling with the roar of the wind in the trees—the wind of autumn—sent a chill to every heart. The summer was gone, and they were still very far from the gold country of which they were in search.

Jack went to sleep that night, beneath his scant clothing, with a weight of returning

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doubt upon him—the country seemed so vast and the chances of finding gold so few. The measured rifle-shots were still going on as he lost his hold upon the world.

Morning brought not much promise of change, and Mason took the lean horses back to grazing ground on the understanding that they were to signal him if the boat came. As the day went on, the wind rose, roaring up the river, lashing the hurrying waters to foam, while the hungry and impatient trailers sat upon the bank in rage and despair.

At last, towards noon, in answer to their frenzied signalling, a man appeared on the hill, and after looking at them for a long time, descended to a boat which could be seen behind a rock, and began bailing it out. An hour later two others joined him, and they all worked leisurely in an effort to render the boat sea-worthy. They were in no haste. At last, after interminable delay, they started poling up the stream, while the trailers cheered and waved their hats.

It was a mad struggle, but the boatmen succeeded in catching a clump of willows and

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swinging to shore to the glad hurrahs of the hungry trailers.

As he joined the others in a rush to see the ferrymen, Jack perceived that the master of the craft was trembling with fear or exhaustion, or both, but that his Indian oarsmen sat calmly on their benches, grinning at the white men.

The Colonel, as one of the oldest and calmest of the trailers, was spokesman for the gold-seekers. He said to the boatmen, "We are mighty glad to see you. We are out of provisions, and some of our men are actually starving. We want you to take one or two of us across to get some food and medicine. That's the first thing we need to do."

The pilot of the boat, a strong young Englishman, shook his head. "I'll take you over, but I don't come back for any man. It's taking death chances."

The Colonel expostulated. "But, man, we must have food; we're eating roots and berries."

The boatman looked back at the river and his face was pale and set. "You'll have to

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get somebody else to do it, then. Look at that river!"

It was an angry flood, and the Colonel could not much blame the man for refusing. As they were still arguing, Mason came up, his eyes glittering with excitement. "Who's going over to get some grub?"

"I am!" said the Colonel.

"No, you're not!" the young trailer answered. "I'm going. Now all you fellows that want a little grub, pony up a dollar, and I'll go across and see what can be done."

"How'll you get back?" asked Jack.

The master of the boat spoke up: "I'll take you over, but I won't come back. If you cross, you take your chances on getting back."

As Mason looked at him in dismay and contempt, one of the half-breeds spoke up: "I'll come back. Give me two dollars, I'll come back."

"All right," said Mason. "I want one other man—"

"Take me!" cried Jack.

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"Not for a minute. No, I want a fellow who knows boats."

A young fellow with a long black beard stepped out. "I'll go."

"Are you used to boats?"

"I was raised on the St. Lawrence."

"Good boy! It's us to the slaughter. Jack, you stay here and be ready to go and get the horses if the boat comes. I'm going to try to get that steamer at Glenora to come and take us off. I can see its smoke from the hill. If it is there I'll fetch it or send somebody that will. I don't see any other way of crossing this creek."

As Jack stood and watched the boat whirl and dip in the mad cross-currents of the river, he was glad he had not been called to make the trip. The whole camp stood gazing at the ferry as it neared the other shore. Its pilot was plainly trying to reach a mighty whirlpool which lay behind a towering rock, and through the Colonel's glass Jack could almost share the fierce struggle with the oars as the men strove to catch the edge of this backwater. They struck it too high, and

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were whirled like a feather out into the current so far below the rock that they could not enter the haven, but by desperate effort they managed to beach the boat behind the next projection of the bank, while all the trailers shouted in congratulation.

Mason turned and waved his hat gayly and set off up the hill to the village, leaving the half-breeds to bail out the boat and prepare for the return.

"It'll be a harder struggle than before," said the Colonel; "the wind is rising;" and with a knowledge of this they all waited for Mason's reappearance with growing concern.

At last they saw him coming down the hill, his back bent with his burden of food. At sight of him the waiting gold-seekers went crazy with joy, and shouted useless words of cheer into the wind. They went out like bubbles in the blast, but they were worth the utterance, after all.

"They're coming!" exclaimed a lookout. "They're going to pole up-stream."

It was true. The brave fellows had swung off and were pulling and poling up the river—

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Mason on shore with a line, the others pushing. Slowly they worked their way up-current till they were far above the camp of trailers—far up towards a terrible reef over which the water tumbled white with wrath. There they seemed to hesitate.

"Here they come!" cried Jack, his heart beating with the excitement of the struggle.

The boat left the shore sidewise, shooting obliquely into mid-current, and the play of the oars was like the flashing feet of some frantic animal struggling for life. Mason was holding the tiller, and the half-breeds were paddling like madmen on the upper side of the boat to keep it to its course. On shore was silence, strained and anxious.

So swift was the rush of the boat towards the rocks that Jack's heart froze with new fear. "They'll be broken to pieces," he said to the Colonel.

"They have a chance," he replied.

A shout was heard, the paddles went into the air, and the boat darted down the stream, below the rocky, dangerous stretch. Another shout and the oars began to play, and

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with a sudden swoop the clumsy craft swung close in to shore, and Mason, rising in his seat, threw a looped rope with the cow-boy's dexterous hand, and caught firm anchorage upon a stump of tree. Then bracing himself, he brought the boat ashore.

Then how they did cheer and crowd down to lay hold of the boat, to shake Mason by the hand, and to praise the boatmen! "You Indians are sure all right with the paddles," said one man.

"You can have my dollar," said another.

The brown men smiled, their broad chests heaving with their labors, and when Mason stepped out, he was fairly mobbed by the men. He fought them away shamefacedly. "No more of that," he said. "Take care of the Injuns."

A purse was quickly made up for the two brave fellows, who were also invited to remain to the feast which the flour and the bacon assured.

As the provisions were being apportioned, Mason said, "I left the Canadian in camp to wait for the boat, and hired an Indian to

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take a letter to the mounted police at Glenora. He said he'd make it in an hour. It's only twelve miles by trail. We ought to get away to-night if the police do their duty with the captain. They can't let us starve here."

The camp was soon merry, and every man set out to watch for the steamer with confident mien.

But it did not come. The day wore on towards mid-afternoon, and still no sign of it. Then the men began to question and grumble.

"Did you put it strong enough?" they asked Mason.

"I told them we were out of grub, and that our horses had no feed."

"You should have gone down yourself. That Injun may not deliver the letter."

"I thought my trick was to get back here with some food," replied Mason, patiently. "That Canadian boy was clean used up by the time we got to town. Don't lose your grip. We'll have that boat here soon. Anyhow, there's nothing to do but wait. I've found that worry don't fat a man nor curses keep out cold."

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Their horses were now all picketed near at hand, and each man had his pack roped and ready to throw on board. Jack had hardly more than a bundle left out of all the goods with which he was burdened at Quesnelle, and the Colonel and Mason had but a tarpaulin and a blanket apiece.

The hours of waiting were long. It was nearly five o'clock before the cry, "There she comes!" arose.

Above the grim firs that clothed the hills to the west a soaring banner of smoke proclaimed the approach of the rescuer. Soon she could be discerned laboring hard against wind and stream, and then the waiting gold-seekers became wild with joy. They shouted, they fired guns, and cheered in relays. They seemed afraid she might not discover their whereabouts.

Slowly she came on, stopping now and then, backing, sidling, feeling her way upward, for she was higher up the Stikeen than any steamer of her size had ever gone before.

She paused sagely, as if to contemplate

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the savage reef and the rocky beach on which the trailers were stranded. With dense clouds of vapor belching from her funnels, she pointed her nose towards the shore, and while her wheel beat the icy river into spray, she swung cautiously in, and hung in the current so near that her captain's orders could be plainly heard.

She conquered at last, and swinging in, lay against the inhospitable shore, and while her cable was made fast to a tree, began to breathe great sighs of relief, tired but triumphant.

With a rush the trailers besieged her, shouting words of thanks to the Captain and the mate.

The skipper, a bluff, square-bearded Scotchman, sarcastically said, "Save your breath and get aboard—all that would go to Glenora. I can't bide here long."

He charged a good round price—twenty dollars for each man and ten dollars for each horse; but what was the use of grumbling? They all rushed aboard with their dunnage, and then brought on their horses—poor, lean, worn creatures. In a half-hour all, every

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man and horse, were aboard; but the boat did not start, for clouds were passing and the wind had suddenly changed and was blowing athwart the river. The Captain said to the Colonel, "I've no mind to be thrown against yon shore."

"You're wise in that," replied the Colonel, "but the smell of your kitchen is maddening to us. The question is, do we get supper?"

"By paying for it, yes."

"But the law of hospitality should make the boat serve us supper," argued the Colonel, whom the men had asked to present this burning question. "Think of it, man! some of us haven't had a square meal in three months."

Mason put in a word: "You're getting full fare from each of us, and for many of us it's nearly our last cent. It would only be the square deal. In fact, it's the right thing."

"See the purser!" exclaimed the Captain, impatiently.

"Victory!" shouted Mason to the men below, and their rush to dinner disturbed the horses beneath them.

It was good to thrust one's knees beneath

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clean linen on a table once more, to have real bread baked in an oven, to have a knife and fork and salt-cellar and saucers and pie! The men ate long and hard, with a gusto that was like that of Christmas or Thanksgiving.

"After all, there's something in civilization," remarked Mason. "When I get old I'm going to eat at a table every day."

While they were lingering at their dried-apple pie, the boat swung off and began to drop down the river, and in security and luxury the trailers sat to watch the lights of Telegraph Creek go by. Then the darkness came on, and they could see only dark wooded hills without light or life.

XIV

JACK IS DISHEARTENED

A COLD wind was blowing and the stars were bright when they landed at the wharf at Glenora. The horses had to be unloaded and picketed out before the men could sleep, and as the steamer berths were not offered to the trailers, so muddy and ragged were they, all went ashore and made their beds wherever they could picket their horses.

Mason and Jack shared the same blankets, and so kept fairly warm as they lay down in a kind of corral which stood on the bank of the river. Nothing could be seen of the town but a big warehouse. All was mysterious and dark and silent save for the dogs barking now and again like sentinels.

The horses were uneasy, and sleep was dif-

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ficult for their masters, but so tired was Jack that he would have slept in the midst of a stampede of buffalo. To-morrow seemed far away and the night deep.

He was awakened by Mason rolling him gently with his foot, and saying, "Hurrah for Teslin Lake!"

Stiff and sore, and rubbing his eyes, Jack rose, with Teslin Lake very far from his thought. His first glance was to discover where he was, his second to measure and gain comfort from the town, which was the point from which he had planned to start on the last stage of his trip to the headwaters of the Yukon.

The more he saw of it, the more disappointing it became. He had thought of it as a swarming, thriving city of departure, the head of a steamboat-line; in fact it was a quiet, almost squalid, village of tents, Indian shacks, and small stores. He had expected to find it full of brisk and breezy miners; in point of fact it was almost solitary, and the look of the street—there was only one—quite disheartening.

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Mason turned to the boy, and said, humorously, "Guess we must have got into the wrong pew. This don't look like the 'jam' we read about, does it? Can't be more than a hundred people here. Only thing that's up to the hills is feed; hay is twenty cents a pound, and oats ten. I reckon we'll not feed the horses more than once."

"I guess all the others went in by way of Skagway," remarked the Colonel. "This is only a back door."

Their first task was to find pasture for the horses, which they did by going down the river. Their next was to discover some place where they could get their own breakfast.

Together with others of their companions on the Long Trail, they went up the narrow, irregular street, a ragged, gaunt, swarthy company.

It was evident that the camp was on the decline. Everywhere outfits were ticketed "For Sale," and stores displayed the signs, "Selling out at cost."

"This will make it easy for me to outfit," said Jack, bravely.

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Mason smiled at him. "So it will—there's comfort in their distress. You'll need all you can carry. The trail is a lu-lu, so they tell me."

The keeper of the eating-house looked them over with pity mixed with contempt. "Say, what did you fellows think you were doing on that trail?"

"Saving money."

"Well, I hope you saved it. You look as if you hadn't saved your skins," he answered, shortly. "What you going to do now?"

"Too soon to think of that. Some of us had planned to go to Teslin and raft down."

The man studied them again with shrewd eyes before he replied, "Well, I advise you to quit. It's getting late, and the Hotalinqua is low, and you'll get frozen in if you try it."

Jack's heart sank as he realized the weight of the landlord's words. It *was* getting late. The cold wind, the frost of the midnight had warned him that August was really over and winter near at hand. His whole summer was gone, his outfit wasted, and his money de-

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pleted. Again a fear of this terrible land swept over him as he heard Mason say:

"No, here is where I get out. I didn't come into this country to pick gold, and the cattle business suits me fine. Montana is good enough for this Injun."

As they walked out into the street Jack's heart was big with sorrow and despair. The thought of losing Mason, of going ahead without him, was intolerable.

"Boy, you've been buncoed," said Mason, as they walked up the street. "As a little *pasear* in the woods this trip is a success; as a route to the Klondike it is a terror. You'd better hit the back-trail."

Jack did not reply, for they came at the moment upon a long string of ragged, discouraged men waiting for the post-office to open, and he took his place in the line, eager to hear from home. Mason walked on. "I don't expect any news from home," said he. "I'll look about the town."

The men round Jack were, in fact, not miners, but a job-lot of disheartened carpenters, farmers, and mechanics, mainly from the

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States, all victims of the Long Trail, and most of them ready to quit and go back. Some of them had come up the river on the ice in the spring, and had been in the camp all summer, dreading and postponing the trip over the short trail between the port and Teslin Lake. And now it was autumn, and their supplies were eaten and their money spent. They added to Jack's depression by their frank words of defeat.

However, as he got his letters from home, and read in them faith and good cheer, his courage returned. A stubborn resolution rose in his heart. "I am hardened to it now. I'll go in alone if I have to. But oh, if only Mason would go with me!" In this lay the hope that buoyed him up; he could not think that Mason would desert him.

He now knew the full measure of his folly. Those who had gone by way of the Seattle and Skagway boats were already in the gold country, while he was but half-way, with only three weak and lame horses and a depleted purse. He had gained enormously in manliness and knowledge and courage, but he was

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not prepared to go on, and he lacked the courage to turn back.

There were a number of men setting forth on the Teslin trail, some as impracticable as himself. One man had designed a narrow hand-cart to pass along a trail. Another was going to pack his goods on his back, taking a load each day as far as he could travel and return. This meant traversing the trail at least eight times, and yet he was one of the most cheerful of all the foolish ones. Another, who had come through with one horse, was going to "relay" in the same way; but there were many others who were entirely willing to quit and go home.

Mason came from the barber-shop looking somewhat like his former self, and at his suggestion Jack bought some new overalls, a jacket, and some shoes. Ten or twelve dollars of his slender fund went in this way. The Colonel took quarters on the boat, turning over the tarpaulin and his blankets to his former partners, who went into camp to save expense.

As they were sitting by their fire that

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night the Colonel came over to make his farewell call. "Well, boys," said he, "what are your plans?"

Mason looked at Jack, who stoutly said, "I'm going on if you'll sell the horses to me."

"I won't sell them to you, I'll give them; they're yours, anyway," replied the Colonel, and Jack's mind reverted to the grim day in the forest when he left them as they thought forever.

Mason said, "I have no claim on any of 'em, my boy. They're all yours, to do what you please with, but I'd advise you to sell 'em and get on the boat with us. This is a hard country on a hardened vet; it's no place for you."

There was a little pause, and in that pause Jack heard the cold wind speak to the river, and the river to the stars, and the words of each were of winter and hunger and death. His mind went out over the mighty and implacable land before him, and he shivered. It was hard to give up; it was harder to part from Mason and go on.

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The Colonel continued: "As you know, I am not a gold-seeker; I came on here for other reasons. My work is done, and duty demands my return. I want to say, boy, that you have been game all through this trip, and that you deserve to succeed; but don't over-estimate your resources."

His voice was kindly, and it was hard to realize that he had been the inexorable avenger. His face expressed concern, even affection, for his boyish partner.

"Well," remarked Mason, after a pause, "I'm taking your advice. It's settled with me. I came in to put you through, Colonel, and as my contract is filled, in a fashion, I get out. There's only one more boat this fall, and so I reckon I'll go to-morrow—only I hate to leave this boy here."

The blood rushed to Jack's face. "Oh, I'm all right," he said. "Don't worry about me. I'll pull through."

Mason looked at him kindly. "I know how you feel, Jack, but you're wrong. You needn't feel cheap. You've earned your diploma. Nobody knew what we were up

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against. You've got a mother at home, and a sister. I can't have you doing anything foolish. Your horses are used up; they won't be able to travel for two weeks, and that will throw you away too late. The Hotalinqua, they say, is low, and your chances for getting down into the gold country this fall are poor. Besides, you ought not to go alone, and the men who are going in from here are a dunghill lot. I reckon you'd just better sell your ponies and give the whole venture up as a bad job."

Jack listened to his argument, knowing well that it was sound, yet his pride, the memory of his boasting, prevented his yielding. He walked away from the camp-fire, his throat aching with grief and disappointment. He had secretly hoped that Mason would go with him, and he felt childishly weak now that he was alone. He had grown to love the trailer, and in his heart had counted upon him.

The obstacles were great—that he knew. He would need a thousand pounds of food

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and a new outfit of clothing. All his dunnage but his bed had been sacrificed to lighten the horses' loads, and even if Mason turned over the three horses to him they would not be able to carry more than three hundred pounds, so weak were they. It would take a month to reach the lake and a week to build a raft, so that winter would be upon him before he set sail. He had gained enormously in resource and in courage by this trip with two experienced trailers, but the toil and danger involved in the trip to Teslin and down the Hotalinqua were too great.

With bitter tears he acknowledged defeat.

XV

JACK KILLS A BEAR

THEY were up at sunrise the next morning, and Mason set out to sell the horses for Jack. The boat was to start at noon, and the time was very short in which to make a good trade, but he succeeded in getting fifty dollars for one and twenty-five dollars each for the others, the whole amount of which he turned over to the boy.

"Only one of them was mine!" Jack exclaimed.

"No matter, we'll play they were all yours," Mason replied, with a smile.

On board the ship the Colonel was sitting at ease in the bow, looking dreamily upstream, quite restored to the man he had seemed when Jack first saw him. Mason, in a substantial miner's suit and a new som-

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brero, was again his handsome self, although still thin and hollow-eyed. As he settled into a chair with a sigh on his lips and a laugh in his eyes, he said:

"Guess I must be getting old, boy. I kind of *like* a chair."

Jack himself, although feeling he ought not to do so, took a keen delight in this his first steamboat ride. The deck seemed so clean, so comfortable, and so secure. The thought of once more being free from struggle, from the fear of rain and wind and insects, was very sweet and restful.

A powerful wind was roaring up the river as the engine began to labor, and into the rush of it the boat set her head and steamed away. The Captain, a silent, tall, big-bearded man, ordered all steam on and drove hard for the "Narrows," which he had explained to the Colonel were dangerous to pass in the night.

After dinner Jack sat on deck with delight, watching the great peaks of the Coast Range draw near. To look upon these wild lands now brought comprehension. He knew how difficult they were, how hard to traverse.

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The Colonel relapsed into his usual taciturnity, but Jack grew bold enough to ask Mason, "Do you suppose he killed that other man?"

"Well, now, I don't let myself speculate on that. The Colonel's business isn't mine, and he is responsible. An officer has the right to shoot a man that resists him, and what happened when they met I don't know. He doesn't talk to me much more than he does to you."

"He's been good to me, Mason, but I can't like him."

"Yes, he's been better than you think. He turned over his share of the grub the last day or two to you."

Jack's face clouded. "I wish he hadn't."

"Oh no, you don't, boy. You wouldn't have got in if he hadn't."

Jack knew that Mason had done more for him than the Colonel, but he could not say so, and the discussion stopped.

The wind grew furious, and the boat answered to the rudder so reluctantly that at last, about four o'clock, the Captain ran into

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a little cove behind a hill, and anchored at the mouth of a creek which came in from the north.

While the boat was swinging in, somebody cried out, "See the bear tracks!" and the passengers all ran to landward of the boat in great excitement. It required no skill to detect the footprints, for they were as plain as cattle tracks in the sand, and Mason pointed out that one or two cubs were among them.

"I think if we lie here long enough, I'll take a trip up this creek and see what I can find," he said to Jack.

"I'll go, too," said the boy.

The captain announced that the boat would spend the night here, as the wind was too strong to permit him to pass the Narrows; so Mason took his rifle and descended to the bank, followed by a half-breed deck-hand named Jim. Jack, with his own gun, to which he had clung all through the journey, brought up the rear.

The stream was full of salmon, and it was plain that the bears had been fishing. The

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fallen logs that crossed the little torrent were still wet with their broad paws, and the half-breed explained that the bears walked these logs till they came directly over the fish, then scooped them up with one swift sweep of their claws. The forest tangle grew more and more dense, until walking was a process of climbing logs and threading briars.

"This would be a poor place to meet a bear," said Mason. "A man would need to kill at the first shot, or it would be all day with him. Jack, I reckon you'd better go back to the boat. 'Pears like a whole herd of the big fellows have passed this way."

Jack looked round into the dimly lighted forest, and at this tangle of logs and brush and trees, and acknowledged a little shiver of awe. "I'm not afraid with you in the lead," he said.

"I'm no professional," returned Mason. "I reckon I can stop any one bear, but we might jump two."

The half-breed pointed at Jack's gun. "Too small; no good for bears."

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"That's all right," explained Jack. "It's smokeless powder and skookum—very strong.

The Indian turned away and they went on, Jack bringing up the rear.

The forest was different from any he had ever seen, so tangled, so impenetrable was it. It was dim, too, a dimness that was like the darkness before a storm, and the boy's heart responded to its menace. What if they should come upon a group of bears sleeping in the thicket?

He fell so far behind that Mason and the Indian had passed round a bend in the river and were to the south of him, when of a sudden he heard a prodigious crackling in the willows, and the next moment, as if in a dream, he perceived a huge, furry animal lunge forth from the thicket and start across a fallen tree just before him and above him. The animal seemed as woolly and as shapeless as a caterpillar, but its huge bulk was awe-inspiring.

For a moment Jack was too astonished to think of his gun, and then, as he raised it, it seemed so tiny, so ineffective, that he hesi-

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tated. In that moment of hesitation Mason called out, "Don't shoot!" but Jack pressed the trigger, and the small rifle sent its steel-jacketed bullet into the huge animal's neck.

The bear was looking to the left, but as the bullet struck him he swung towards his enemy and snarled, hesitating a moment. Then he leaped from the log into the willows and disappeared.

Mason, splashing through the stream, mounted a big tree which lay caught in a crotch, and from this point fired at the bear just as it was entering the forest. With a whining noise it fell curled up and furious with its pain. Mason fired again, and the beast lay still.

In vast excitement the two men hurried towards the wounded animal, followed closely by Jack. As they drew near, the bear struggled feebly and fell back dead. The second bullet had mercifully entered the brain.

"Why didn't you let me kill him?" asked Jack, indignantly. "I hit him first."

"My boy, it's a wonder he didn't fall on

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top of you," Mason said. "Cæsar, but he's a whale!"

As they stood looking at the big body, the steamer whistle began to blow.

"What's the meaning of that?" said Mason to the Indian deck-hand.

"Steamer goin' on."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Mason. "Boy, we've got to scramble. It's a long way down there and slow travelling."

"And leave our bear?" asked Jack.

"No help for it. We don't want to be left here; there's no trail down the river and we've got no boat."

The Indian smiled. "Float on log."

"Not on your tintype! Come on, boy."

"I stay," said the Indian. "Hide good—catch big money for 'im."

"All right, you can have him," said Mason. "Only if I find the boat is not going, I'll come back and help you skin him."

"You tell boat wait for me. I come quick," said the Indian, with a grin.

The hoarse voice of the steamer called again insistently, impatiently, and Mason set off

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down the stream with Jack regretfully at his heels.

"You see," explained the plainsman, "there's no trail down the river, and we couldn't stay here. In fact, it would be sure death to anybody but an Indian to go through the Narrows in a boat, to say nothing about a log. I'm no water-dog."

Jack knew all this to be true, and yet he could not but regret leaving that fine robe behind. It would have been such a trophy.

Tired and torn by the briers, they came out on the little sand-bar just as it was growing dusk, and it was plain by the smoke of the steamer that she was fired up and ready to go. The wind had changed suddenly, releasing her from her enforced mooring.

The mate was furious when Mason carried the Indian's message. "Wait!" he roared. "I won't wait a minute! He's always doing crazy things like that."

Another hand, also an Indian, came to Mason to ask where Jim was. Mason told him, and also said: "The mate is going to

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leave him. You'd better throw out his blankets.'"

The fellow slipped away, and just as the boat was getting from shore Jack saw him heave a bundle ashore and leap after it. It gave him a sense of deep relief to know that there were two to share the danger and loneliness of that place.

"These wonderful boatmen can navigate the river on a shingle," said the Colonel, when the thing was explained to him. "You needn't worry about them. They're fifty dollars in."

What made the matter so disturbing was the fact that the Captain was forced to lay-to just above the Narrows, after all, and only a few miles below Jack's bear. He went to sleep thinking about it, and in his dreams saw again the huge beast loom above him, snapping and snarling.

He woke at daylight, and rose and dressed, in order to see the river, and while he was on deck studying the mighty wall of a glacier which came curving down out of the clouds, to end almost at sea-level, he heard a shout,

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and turned to see his Indian friends go by in a big boat, with four others, their faces all shining with joy and bear's-fat. A big canoe voyaging south had stopped to pick up the deck-hands and the bear, and they were all bound now for the coast town, Fort Wrangell, to sell their trophy—Jack's trophy.

Jack motioned to them to come back, but they only laughed and swept on into the madly swirling waters.

The steamer ran into the jaws of the cañon through which the river broke its way, as cautiously as it could, but nearly lost her wheel as the wind and waters seized her and swung her athwart the current. The Captain strove valiantly at the helm, and with the loss of only one or two paddles, swept out into the wide and placid river beyond.

It was like entering through a tempestuous gate into a splendid sea, for the river broadened into a beautiful bay, and the boy thrilled with pleasure at the thought that he was about to look upon the Pacific Ocean. Truly he was an adventurer, thus to be approaching the coast after a thousand miles of inland trail.

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In such spirit the explorers of old came to the end of their long and toilsome journeys. With such feelings did the men of 'forty-nine first catch a glimpse of the Golden Gate—at least this was the way in which Jack dramatized his emotions. The fact that he happened at the moment to be riding in sumptuous ease could not blot out the months of toil in the dank, deep forests of the Skeena.

Just before they reached the bay the Captain was seen to grasp his wheel with firm hands, and to signal, "Go ahead *all steam!*" The boat had touched bottom! The engine wheels whirled, the piston-rod strained to its duty, the walking-beam crooked like a giant's arm in combat. A moment of struggle, of doubt, of straining, and with shattered, splintered paddles the boat leaped the bar and rode into the bay in safety.

Mason turned to Jack. "Do you know what that means? This river is falling. This is the last boat this season. If we'd waited for the next we should have been trapped. Our luck is still with us."

With a sense of having escaped through a

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closing gate, they all turned to study the town towards which the maimed boat was slowly drawing.

Fort Wrangell is a town without horses or wagons. Its streets are full of stumps. Its sidewalks run on stilts. It is the port of entry for the Stikine River and is on American territory, for a narrow strip of shore runs down from Alaska like the handle of a skillet. It lies on an island facing a glorious bay, and is a half-way point for the steamer that plies between Seattle and Skagway.

The bay opened to the west and north upon the mighty Pacific, and the boy's heart swelled with emotion as he realized it. Great, sombre, wooded hills came down to the edge of the water. Crows were flying thickly and gulls flitted to and fro, following the steamer, uttering plaintive cries. The smell of salt-water was in the air.

"Well," said Mason, reflectively, "I've always expected to see the ocean some day, but not here. It's as lonesome as Montana."

They came to anchor at a long wharf, and, with their beds on their backs, all the trailers

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swarmed out and stood irresolutely on the planks, while those who knew the town streamed past them. After breakfast they held a council. Several announced their intention of taking the first boat south. Others were for going on to Skagway. All were disheartened and languid.

Some of them had not even money enough to get to Seattle, and were planning to work their way down the coast on some of the big freight boats. It was plain at a glance that the little town had no employment to offer.

Jack and Mason got one of the young men to watch their bundles, and set off up the walk together.

"It's hard lines, partner," said Mason, as they drew near the ram-shackle shanties that lined the beach, "but never you mind. You go back. It's a pizen kind of a country up here. It don't look right to me."

It didn't look right to Jack, and yet it was hard to admit defeat and return without even so much as a bear-skin to show for all his toil and wasted money; but there seemed no help for it. To go on towards Dawson with

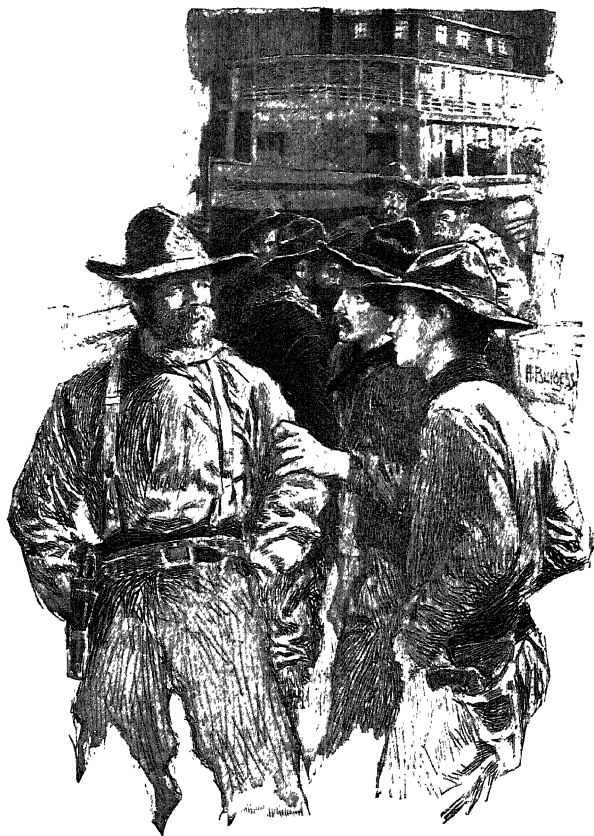
his few remaining dollars was almost hopeless. He didn't feel so sure of finding work up there in the North. The loss of two months' valuable time had brought the winter very close.

The gold-seekers soon saw all there was of the town, and, after buying some bread and sardines, went back to share with the fellows who were penniless. The Colonel, who still had money, asked Mason and Jack to go to the hotel with him, but they refused.

"I can't afford it," said Jack. So they camped, eating their lunch while the crows talked hoarsely, the fishes leaped from the glittering bay, and the gulls circled in airy flight. It was all so peaceful there and so strange—like a scene in a dream.

A boat was due that night going south, so the wharf-master said, therefore they all waited. As the afternoon wore away and the gold and crimson light of the sunset came, some of the men grew boisterous, but most were silent and listless. It was an inglorious end to all their hopes and plans.

Just in the dusk of evening a vessel was



'THIS BOAT IS FULL OF GOLD, AND ALL SKAGWAY IS
OUT IN A BIG RUSH INTO THE ATLIN LAKE
COUNTRY'."

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seen coming into the bay from the northwest, and instantly the whole town was alert. The lights were turned on, express trucks trundled up the walk, and bands of young people came loitering down to see the ship come in.

She seemed a big boat, a wonderful floating palace to Mason and Jack as she swung to and made fast. The passengers, glad of a chance to land and walk, hurried out upon the gang-plank, and as they passed, the citizens asked, "What news?"

"Great news. This boat is full of gold, and all Skagway is out in a big rush into the Atlin Lake country. They've made big strikes there."

The news ran like fire through the blood of every listener. Each man straightened and his eyes gleamed. "Where is Atlin Lake?"

"Only about a hundred miles from Skagway." And thereupon he drew a rough map to indicate the new territory.

"I'm going in!" exclaimed one of those who had come down the Stikeen, and like a chorus came the shout from the other trailers:

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"So am I! Cheer up, boys, here's one more chance!"

Mason plucked a big man by the sleeve. "Is that right, stranger? Is the strike real?"

"Yes. The whole town was leaving as I came through. It's a big placer camp, so I was told. I saw the gold from the discovery claim. It's coarse and very heavy. Looks like a big thing, and it's very accessible."

Mason turned to Jack. "I've a nudge that here is where you and I make good. Here's where our luck changes. I'll go you a trip into this placer country. What do you say?"

Jack, his face radiant with joy, threw out his hand.

"I'm with you to the end!" he replied, with boyish grandiloquence.

XVI

JACK AND MASON VOYAGE NORTH

THE southern boat went away leaving the little band of weather-worn gold-seekers camped upon the bare planks of the wharf. They were now afraid to go too far afield for fear of missing the up-going steamer, which was already overdue, therefore they spent their time in fishing or in planning their new prospecting tour.

As Mason and Jack walked aside, the trailer thrust a handful of bills towards the boy. "See what the Colonel turned in on me as he left."

Jack stared in amazement. "What's that for?"

"My wages—and a bonus for us both. He said we'd shared his hardships, and he felt that he ought to do something to help us over

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the low spots. It seems the collector up there knew some friends of his and so cashed his drafts."

"I'm glad he's not going with us. He was a strange man. I was afraid of him."

"He was out for revenge, all right, but his heart was warm when it came to us. He seemed sorry to leave us," replied Mason; and they dropped all mention of him at that point. He never again entered their lives.

The water of the bay was bright with sun—the waves were leaping, and the far hills allured to exploration. Why should the boy's heart be heavy? It was glorious to anticipate a real ocean voyage, and to think that it would lead, after all, to a golden river. Why should he doubt? To dream dreams is the privilege of youth.

The two friends were silent as turtles as they sat on the sunny wharf and watched the southern gateway of the bay. There was so little to say, for they had talked themselves out on all subjects, and Jack spoke only to say, "I wonder what this new gold-field is

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like?" His letters home were long, and full of confidence and hope again.

At last the boat came, a small, slow, old-fashioned freight steamer, but that did not matter to the trailers—who crowded aboard like a colony of ants, each with his roll of bedding. The boat was already crowded, and every berth doing full duty, so they all sat around on their blankets on deck and watched the more fortunate passengers without envy—too grateful for their rescue to be critical.

It was a glorious ride to Jack, for the wonders of the deep seemed to offer themselves to view. Strange and monstrous fishes darted by, or leaped into the air—and once a whale was seen far to the seaward. The course of the ship for nearly the whole way lay inside the islands which break the mighty surge of the open sea, so that the boat ran as steadily and quietly as if on a river. The Coast Range grew each hour more bold and rugged, and when night fell and the moon rose, the scene was magical in its desolate and sombre beauty.

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The trailers spread their beds on the floor of the "social room," as it was called, and there was so much skylarking and noise that the mate appeared at the door and savagely commanded silence, for which most of the men were grateful.

Jack woke next morning with a ferocious appetite, and so, indeed, did all the gold-seekers, and as they had to wait till the second table, their hunger developed complaint. It seemed as if the "first-class people" were maliciously keeping them out of their breakfast. But even this waiting had an end, and at last they all sat to the feast. It mattered little to them that the steak was tough and the coffee over-boiled. They furnished the sauce of hunger to their food and were happy.

All day they sailed peacefully northward; and at last, on the loftiest mountains, huge glaciers could be seen curving downward out of the clouds, graceful as rivers—shining like silver amid the storm-darkened rocks. Some of them descended almost to the edge of the water, others stopped abruptly high in air,

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there to melt and give themselves to the sea in milky floods of rushing water. The climate grew colder and more rainy, the sky darker, the sea more savage and lone.

Late in the day they entered the Lynn Canal, a long, narrow arm of the ocean, and turned straight towards the majestic Coast Range, on which snow and ice glittered. This bay was in truth a cañon in the mountains which the sea had filled, and the boy shuddered to think how deep were the cruel gray waters which rolled beneath them.

It was dark when they caught the twinkle of the lights of Skagway, now world-famous as the port of entry to the Klondike. Little could be discerned of the town beyond three or four very long and very high wharves which ran far out into the shallow bay, sparkling with electric lights.

As they neared the head of the bay, all the tales he had heard of the cruel White Pass filled Jack's mind. The gold-fields were not to be approached by steamer, that he knew. The town, too, had a wild name, and he was glad of Mason's leadership as they left the

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boat and passed to the shore—still carrying their beds on their backs. They would no more think of leaving their blankets, even for a moment, than they would think of pulling off their boots.

They found shelter in a rough pine "hotel," which was indeed only a boarding-house, and the proprietor, delighted with this unexpected rush of custom, proved instantly communicative. "Yes, the whole town is out on the strike," he said. "You're just in time to get in on it."

"Tell us about it!" demanded the gold-seekers, eagerly.

"There isn't much to tell. Jake Hilyer came in here about two weeks ago for grub, and brought some coarse gold to pay for his outfit. The news leaked out somehow, but no one knew where Jake was located. He pulled out in the night and no one knew which way he went—and they wouldn't never have known only a fellow hunting caribou over in Atlin met Jake going in. Then the whole thing came out. He's got a secret way over the glacier, and he's been working over there

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all summer, sneaking back and forth, saying nothing to nobody."

"Did they trail him up?" asked Mason.

"They tried to, but nobody can find his cut-off. They tracked him to the glacier, and when they got there they were stumped. They mostly go over the White Pass to Bennett, then round by boat to Tagish, and over Tagish to Atlin."

"How far is it?"

"About a hundred and twenty miles—but it's not more than forty over the glacier."

The gold-seekers, big-eyed and open-eared, sat on their packs in the dimly lighted office room, their minds busy with plans for getting to the new diggings. Many of them were reduced almost to their last dollar, and were correspondingly desperate to get to the camp to secure work, and to win a share in a claim.

Mason, with his remarkable power of reaching the heart of the matter, studied the maps and the various routes, and strongly advised against any attempt to cross the glacier.

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"In fact," he said, "unless you can put up at least fifty dollars for transportation and grub, you'd better not try to go in. It's not safe to count on work in a new camp, and I don't understand that anybody is panning gold the first day or two."

Among the men of the Long Trail was a group of sturdy fellows from Iowa and Illinois, who had started with even a scantier allowance than Jack's, and who were now almost destitute of clothes and money. They announced their plan for a last desperate venture. Depositing with the landlord enough money to buy return tickets to Seattle, they pooled every other cent they had for food enough to last seven days, and prepared to storm the glacier pass.

Jack's heart was fired by their bravery, and he would have joined them but for Mason's cool caution. "Not for me," he said. "I'm no Swiss guide. There's an easier way, and that we take."

Late in the night the other fellows could be heard talking of their route next day, and they were as gay as if about to go berrying.

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"They'll all be back here in three days," said the landlord to Mason. "They don't know what they're up against."

They rose early, and after breakfast took up their packs. At about seven o'clock, while Mason and Jack stood at the door to say "Good luck," these farmer boys started off, each with a heavy burden on his back, bound for the high trail. Jack, lifting his eyes to the bleak mountains, on which the clouds hung cold and gray and menacing, was glad he had been prevented from joining them.

"Good-bye! See you in Atlin!" each man shouted, waving his hat cheerily, confidently, as if success were assured.

By noon Mason had made his purchases and was ready for a pack-train to carry the outfit over the divide, and Jack, who had seen all there was of interest in the town, was eager to be on the way. All reports of the gold-fields were most encouraging. "And we're to be in on the ground-floor," Mason said. "It would be funny if after going round Robinson's barn we should win out, wouldn't it?"

XVII

JACK REACHES THE GOLD COUNTRY

HAD Jack been less intent on his gold-hunting, Skagway, and especially its surroundings, would have enthralled him. On every side rose the stern mountains, and the river which roared along its boulder-strewn bed to the bay was full of the silt of the granite over which it had ground its way. The whole flat on which the town stood was indeed the work of this stream in its elder, more potential days. The village itself was quite humdrum, but its cordon of mountains appealed to the prairie-born youth with great power.

There was little sign along the streets of the flood of frenzied gold-seekers which had passed through on its way across the hills to the mighty valley beyond. Only here

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and there a tent floor or a scattered circle of blackened embers gave evidence of the rush.

At last the packer for whom they were waiting came. He was a slender, reticent, and self-contained fellow, a little younger than Mason, and evidently a man of education. "His name is Siebert," said the landlord. "His father is the professor of a big college back in the States, but he knows his business."

This interested Jack, and he attempted to open a conversation with the packer as he was examining their outfit. But Siebert answered coldly. The boy was only another tenderfoot to him; but when Mason led a horse up and began to pack it with their bundles, Siebert's eyes lighted. "You've been there before," said he. "Where?"

"Montana."

"I know Montana—careered all over the Kalispell range one season."

"So have I," said Mason.

"Then shake," said Siebert, extending his hand, and they shook hands heartily.

Mason went on: "Don't make any mistake

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about this boy. He's just off a thousand miles of the worst trail I ever trod. He's sure season-checked."

Jack's throat filled with gratitude for this praise.

"Good boy!" said Siebert. "What trail was it?"

Mason explained while they were packing the horses, and by the time they pulled the last cinch they were all friends—almost partners in the venture.

"I haven't gone in on any of these rushes because I saw good, safe money right here packing, but I've staked a fellow on this Atlin run," remarked Siebert.

Mason winked at Jack. "I've been telling the boy here that he'd sure make a strike as a cook, but he won't hear to it. Nothing but sieving out gold will do him."

They got off at once, as Siebert was anxious to reach a certain cabin, which was his regular stopping-place. The road for a few miles went directly up the swift little river, crossing and recrossing it many times. For long distances corduroy bridges covered deep mo-

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rasses of tree mould, and at others the turnpike was dug over rocky hills.

"In the old days," said Siebert, "we floundered through the mud." By "old days" he meant the previous April and May. "Now a railway is being built, you see, and will get to Bennett by spring. We've seen great changes this summer."

The day had grown gloomy, the heights were lost in whirling mist, and the sound of the river was a snarl, but Jack was happy. He loved the advance into mystery with two such capable companions. Siebert walked ahead, leading a pack-horse, and Jack followed with another, while Mason brought up the rear by driving three others, loose on the trail. It seemed to them both the most natural thing in the world to be leading or driving pack-horses.

They camped that night in a deserted cabin close to the river, and Jack cooked the supper. This, too, seemed the natural thing for him to do.

They went to bed early, and were up early and pushing upward before it was fairly light.

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An hour later they left the wagon-road and began to climb rapidly over a rough and stony trail into an ever wilder, weirder, and more desolate land. Dead horses lay in hundreds—the way was paved with them.

As they stopped to rest once, Siebert said: "Don't touch a drop of water on the trail till I tell you. The streams are all poisoned with dead horses. There is only one place to drink on the trail."

It was a drear and savage world up there—a world of peaks half hid, of valleys, of shadow, of streams reeking with miasma, of rocks slippery and wreck-bestrewn. It had no sunshine—this world—and the wind rushing through the cleft in the mountains was like the blast of some cavern of despair, carrying with its rush the moans of all the murdered horses that lay behind. It was lonely, too; only a few travellers were abroad in the storm.

All day they climbed amid these dreadful sights and ominous sounds, and when they camped at night it was in a small valley in a gray rain, which hid the outer world from

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view. To be alone in such a land would have been terrifying almost to madness.

All night the rain beat upon their tent and the wind roared and moaned round them—and Jack, young as he was, lay awake a long time, thrilling to the melancholy power of its tale. He went to sleep at last, wishing the morning would come, and when he woke the sun was shining on a distant peak, although the mist still clung to the valley, and his brave and hardy guides were astir, brisk, alert, and undismayed.

The descent that day led to a less inhospitable land; and when at about two o'clock they came to the shore of Lake Bennett, Jack's blood thrilled to its beauty. Sparkling in the sun, it wound away between purple hills, and its far vistas seemed to promise a saner, sweeter way to fortune.

Bennett was a town of departure—a village on the sand, where boats were building and loading for their long journey down the river to the Klondike. Its one street was composed of storehouses, saloons, and temporary hotels. It was also the headquarters of the

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Canadian mounted police, for this was the Northwest Territory.

Steamers had begun to run from here to White Horse Rapids, and one scow with a rude engine in it was about to start for Atlin Lake. Upon this boat Mason at once engaged passage, on the theory that time was more valuable than money at this moment. It was a rude little craft with no berths, no dining-room—in short, not much else but boiler-room, and that was nearly filled with wood for the engine.

With a hearty good-bye to Siebert, they went aboard with their dunnage, and a couple of hours later the shaky craft pulled out and began to puff slowly to the north, down the long and narrow lake. It was a glorious evening. The sky was filled with splendid sunset clouds, and the lake, rough and tumbling in the wind, was almost violet in depth of color. The mountains, rugged and almost bare, rose abruptly from the shore.

As they steamed on, they passed a number of clumsy scows laboring downward, some of

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them carrying coops of chickens and pens of pigs, as well as household goods. Children could be seen on one of these curious vessels, and a sturdy woman was hanging out her wash. All seemed happy and confident, and shouted and waved their hands in greeting and cries of "Good luck!"

Mason took his bed and led Jack up on the roof of the boat, and "made down" there, for the air in the hold was very bad; and so they lay far into the night, watching the sparks fly from the stack, and listening to the laboring cough and hoarse grunting of the engine.

"Well, this is a new way to prospect," said Mason; "but I kind of like it, after all."

Morning found them in Tagish water, a splendid lake which ran for twenty miles or more to north and to south, beyond the reach of the eye. Jack could hardly believe it to be only a lake, but the ice-armored Coast Range proved that it was barred from the ocean in that direction at least. All the morning they passed row-boats going in filled with prospectors like themselves, all eager and gay and confident.

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They landed late in the afternoon at Atlin City, a village of tents in the woods of the shore—and from here their luggage had to be transported to Atlin Lake, some miles to the east. Horses were scarce and rates of freighting high, so Mason said: "It's tough work for cow-boys, but I reckon we're due to make burros of ourselves and pack this stuff across the hill. But before doing that let's get some supper."

Supper at the only restaurant in camp was a dollar each, and Mason hesitated. "That's a good deal," said he. "I guess we'll have to unpack and cook our own."

The Chinaman proprietor looked at them with smiling eyes. "Callybou meat," said he, enticingly.

"Caribou!" shouted the trailer. "That settles it. We eat."

It was a delicious meal, and when they had finished, Mason paid his money with satisfaction. "That's our last look at a real table," he hastily added. "It's up to you now."

It was only two miles across the ridge between the two lakes, but it took them till

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late at night to carry their outfit across. They made three trips, always in company with dozens of others, and the spirit of good cheer and helpfulness was never absent. Jack was tired enough as he staggered down to the shore of the wide lake the third time.

"Good thing we laid in that caribou steak," said Mason. "We couldn't have made this in three trips without it." As a matter of fact, he had carried nearly twice as much as Jack on each trip.

They did not put up their tent, but rolled into their beds without undressing, aching with fatigue. Their rest was broken by others coming and going all night and by the tramp of the big red pack-horse—the only one on the trail—and by the *click-clack* of oarlocks as the ferry-boat came and went.

The sun shone directly on their faces as it peeped above the hills across the lake, and as Jack sat up he faced one of the most beautiful sights of his life—a lake, placid as glass, reflecting all the glories of the morning. He sprang up with heart as light as a feather. This land was not the grim north he had

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feared; it was beautiful, invigorating, inspiring! He longed to let his mother know how fine and safe it was. "Why, it's like September at home!" he said.

Mason, too, was delighted. "I never saw a piece of water as big as that," he said. "It sure is fine. Ought to be good fishing here."

It cost them two dollars more to get rowed across the lake, but that seemed very reasonable when they considered how much time and labor would have been necessary to effect a crossing themselves.

The boat was filled with gold-seekers and their baggage, and moved slowly, softly, as if in oil. The mountains were resplendent to the south. As they neared the mouth of Pine Creek, the river of golden sand, each man strained his eyes as if hoping to perceive the glitter of heaped gold, but all that could be seen was a fringe of boats before a pleasant wooded bank and a group of tents gleaming in the evergreens. Gold-fields are always more alluring at a distance than when underfoot. It took but a few minutes to get the "lay of the land."

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Pine City was but a camp of supplies. The "Discovery Claim" was some eight miles up the stream, and all staked out. There was nothing to do but go into camp in the willows among the tents close-set along the shore of the lake and wait for another day.

The whole camp was grumbling over the way in which men had claimed locations for others, erecting stakes to hold them, so that no one knew which were the real claims and which the bogus. The land recorder was a mere boy, and the rush had left him helpless to do more than give a receipt for the money paid for each filing. The whole district was in confusion, and no one knew whether the claims were in British Columbia or the Northwest Territory.

"The only way to do," said one tall miner from Idaho, "is to pitch your tent on a claim, go to work at the dirt, and stand off any one that meddles with you."

With this man Mason at once struck up an acquaintance, and from him obtained a full history of the camp. "There have been two rushes," he said, "one to the south fork

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and one to Lake Surprise." Here he winked. "There's another one due, and you want to be ready to take a part in it. It's likely to come any time. They are out prospecting, and as soon as they strike it the news will leak out. It always does."

Jack's heart beat fast with excitement. He was at last "Johnny on the spot" in the land of gold and all about lay wondrous possibilities. One man, eight miles up the river, was said to be "cleaning up" two thousand dollars a week. Jake Hilyer, who held "Discovery Claim," was doing better than that.

After setting their tent, Mason proposed that they take a run up the trail to spy out the land. "We've got to see how they do it," he said, "and the quicker we learn the ropes the better."

The town was already laid out ambitiously with names tacked to the trees to indicate streets and boulevards; stores and banks were being organized, and saloons abounded; but all these were soon left behind, and the trail, hard and fine, mounted pleasantly

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along the valley of the Pine River. It was busy with miners packing up or packing down, and all of those who were going up were bending low with their burdens.

After about four miles' travel our adventurers found themselves in the gold country, where men were sawing lumber for sluice-boxes and building cabins and digging ditches.

Here they saw the shine of the precious yellow sand, and their blood quickened as they realized that under their feet lay untold wealth.

Some of the miners had little bottles of gold nuggets to show, and all were confident and happy—quite in key with the delicious autumn weather. They gave information and advice readily. "Be ready for the next rush," they said. "These creeks are all rich."

At last they came to Hilyer's sluiceway, where men were shovelling dirt into the boxes. Here was the actual mine for which Jack was in search. Here in a flash he saw and understood what he could do.

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"It is very simple; I can build a ditch lik that. I can construct a sluice-box," said he to himself, "and I can mine out gold," and the desire to possess a claim filled his heart with unrest. "There must be other gulches just as good as this," he said to Mason.

"Sure," responded the trailer, "but as I don't know a thing about trailing one up, our chances are poor. But we'll learn," he added, quietly. "We're a little behind on this rush, but there are others. It's our lay to move up here and keep tab on the lads who know their business."

To every one he met he talked, and when they started home—that is, to Pine City—he was in full possession of the general situation.

"The gold comes from those hills to the east," he said, "and what we want to do is to join the band working to locate new diggings on the creeks above here. We're going to win out," he said, with firm conviction.

XVIII

A MIDNIGHT RACE

THE man from Idaho excited Jack's interest and admiration. He seemed the typical miner, tall, raw-boned, slab-sided, but powerful as a mule. "I've been a miner all my life," he told them. "I just happened in on this 'stampede' while going out from the Klondike. Luck was ag'in me there, but I feel I'm goin' to catch on to something here." He was alone, and, seeing this, Jack invited him over to take supper, which seemed to please him very much, and the food aroused his enthusiasm. "I've been living on bread and beans," he said, "and your cookin' does me good. I'm much obliged." His name was Bill Carney, and in acknowledgment of their courtesy, as he and Mason sat smoking before the fire, he became confidential and

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told his story, ending by saying: "I like you boys, and as I'm all alone here I'd like to sort o' yoke up with you, if you don't mind. This boy's cookin' kind o' reminds me of home."

Mason agreed to this, and Jack said it was no harder to cook for three than for two. This seemed to affect Carney deeply. "You won't lose nothin' by it. I'll do my share." After a long pause he suddenly said, "See that feller camped next to that big rock?" He lowered his voice to a whisper. "Don't let him see you lookin' that way; just listen and act careless. He's on to a strike made somewhere on one of the streams that run into Fir Creek, and I'm watching him. He's due to pull out to-night, and when he goes I'll be at his heels, you bet. Put a little grub in your pockets, and some pencils and paper, and be ready to slide out o' here any moment I lay a hand on you."

"What makes you think he's going to-night?" asked Jack.

"Never you mind, boy, how I know; all is, when I pass you the sign, you follow me like a house afire."

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Jack did not know it, but the tide of his fortunes had been turned towards success by the simple act of inviting this rough and lonely man to supper. On such small things do many a man's career hinge.

"Let's go into your tent," suggested Carney. "I want to show you something."

The tent was hardly larger than a dog-kennel, but they all crawled in and lay with their heads together, while the big miner exhibited a map and talked of it in whispers. "I've been panning this creek from Atlin up," he said, "and there's color all along, but no pay-dirt. The pay-dirt is on some one of the branches. I overheard some talk to-day that put me on to this strike—they've been holding it off for a party of their friends to arrive. At first I thought you were the ones, but the real parties haven't got in; they're due to-night. What I look to see this feller do is to get up a little before daylight and pull out through the woods, leading the whole party on a still hunt. If they do, it's our business to take in on their heels and never lose sight of them, no matter what they

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do or say. The best runner wins in this race, providing he knows the way."

As he talked, Jack's eyes glowed and his muscles swelled. He felt the fleetness of the deer in his limbs. But Mason said: "I grew up on a horse; I'm a poor bargain as a foot-soldier. Jack, it's up to you and Carney."

"You may depend on me. I was always a good runner," said Jack. "I held the championship for two years in our school."

"Very good," said Carney. "But this means scrambling through briers, wading brooks, and leaping rocks. All is, don't try to outrun me, just keep behind me and be as quiet as you can. You see, we go straight north for about four miles, then turn up Fir Creek. If we lose the fellows on the way, we'll find them on the ground, but we mustn't lose 'em, and we want to distance any one else who may catch on. The main thing is to slide out of camp when they do. They'll go like ghosts, and so there's no sleep for me."

Mason studied the map carefully. "While I'm only second-class as a sprinter," he re-

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marked, "my bump of location is monstrous. I'll fall behind, probably, but I'll turn up—so don't wait for me."

So it was arranged, and Carney finally said: "I'll go to my tent and pretend to go to bed, and the boy can lie down and sleep. I'll wake you both. Don't lay off so much as a shoe."

Jack was tense with excitement, and after Carney left, he asked, "Do you believe what he says?"

"Why not? This is the way they 'rushed' Spruce Creek. Besides, what object would he have in stringing us out? No, he's square. Of course he may be mistaken, but he means well by us. You lay down and go to sleep; I'll watch for a while."

Jack got into his bed, but could not sleep, so vividly had his imagination pictured forth that treasure spot on the creek. He had no doubt of his ability to follow Carney or any one else in the camp, for he had always been fleet of foot and of unblemished lungs, and though he was not in prime condition, his heart was resolute.

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Slowly the babble of the camp died out and the soft lip-lap of the wavelets on the beach came to soothe his excited brain. Mason, sitting near the door of the tent, smoked in silence, rigid of pose as an Indian, his senses alert as an owl's.

Jack had been asleep—how long he could not say—when Mason laid a hand on his arm. “Up, boy! Things are doing!”

Jack sprang up and threw off his sleep like a coat, his heart beating wildly, his eyes wide with excitement. “Where are they?”

Mason whispered: “Be careful! A boat-load of fellows passed that rock a few minutes ago and landed up the lake somewhere. They were too quiet to be natural. Carney is waiting.”

Stealthily they crawled out of the tent and joined Carney, who was waiting in the shadow of a big rock a few rods away. Taking Jack's hand, he whispered: “Not a sound, now, if you can help it. They've landed.”

It was the moment just before the dawn, still, crisp, invigorating. Silently Carney stole up the bank into the deep forest, and so, by a

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circuit, approached the spot where the incoming boat lay beached. They were walking swiftly, in single file, Carney in the lead, when they came in sight of a group of shadowy forms sitting in a circle around a faint light. Putting his lips close to Jack's ear, Carney said: "He's showing his map. Keep an eye on the feller with the white hat."

The man wearing the sombrero rose, put out his light, and turned into the forest, silently followed by six of his friends. Carney struck in after them as noiselessly as he could, and all travelled for a time in perfect silence, save for the crackling of twigs under their feet and the swish of willows as they threaded a creek bottom.

It became more difficult to follow as the trail faded out, and only the noise made by the men ahead kept them from hearing their spies. Had the man ahead kept moving he would have known nothing of his pursuers; but at some turning of the trail he suddenly halted, to wait for his partners to come up, and his keen ears detected Carney, close on the heels of his rear guard.

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Carney halted and fell to the ground, and Jack and Mason followed him; but too late, the men ahead began to run, and the crackling of dry branches towards the lake told that some one else of the camp had joined the rush.

Carney rose. "Now, boys, it's hot-foot—and the best man wins. Follow me."

With no further precaution as to noise he started off, running in a northeasterly direction, followed closely by Jack, whose breath was shortened by his excitement.

For a mile their way lay in a thicket of black pines, a forest quite clear of underbrush, and they made good time—too swift for Mason, who labored over the stone ridges, like the cow-boy that he was, and at last fell behind. Jack knew he had left his partner, but mindful of what was at stake ran on doggedly, exulting in the thought of making good return for all Mason's care.

He came suddenly to a valley of deep grass dotted with clumps of willow, and in crossing nearly fell into a deep pit, a dangerous place, but was saved by the chalky-white banks of

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the pool, which gleamed in the faint light of dawn.

Carney made no pause, but pushed straight for the dark forest beyond. A small stream lay near the northern bank, and through this he splashed; but Jack, mindful of the law that a runner is no swifter than his feet, ran up the creek till he found a place narrow enough to jump. This caused him to lose sight of Carney for the moment, but he could hear him crashing through the bushes of the other side. He ran on, bearing a little to the left.

His breath was roaring now and his side ached painfully, but he did not slacken his stride. How could he when so much depended on keeping his leader in view? He dared not even stop to listen for Mason, so fearful was he of losing his guide.

It seemed now that he could hear several runners behind him, but Carney was surely in the lead, therefore he pressed desperately on. Suddenly the comparatively smooth course ended. He plunged into a steep, rocky ravine. "This must be Fir Creek,"

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he said, and turned to the right. His leader was toiling directly up the stream. There was a faint trail, but it led through dew-laden willows, up rocky, projecting banks, and through tall grass, crossing and recrossing the creek.

Our hero was about to cry out and fall into a walk, so weary was he, when he came in full sight of his guide. His heart fairly stood still as he perceived that the man ahead was not Carney but the man in the white hat! He had outrun every man but the discoverer himself.

The dawn was coming and that made the trail a little less difficult, but Jack's legs were numb and his mouth dry. It seemed as if he could not run another step, and he was about to drop to the earth for rest when the man ahead slackened his pace, to rest and to listen. He, too, was winded.

Jack stopped just where a willow screened him and listened. With pounding pulse and gasping breath, he could hear a faint crackling below; some one else was close behind. "Carney, I hope," he said.

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The man ahead also heard the sound and, turning, started on up the stream. He was hardened to the chase, and could have left Jack behind had he been so minded, but believing the runner to be one of his own men he dared not get too far ahead. Undoubtedly he had given them directions as to the creek and the exact location of the bar, and yet he was too anxious to guide them to rush heedlessly on.

Jack pressed on as closely as he could without coming into full view, running swiftly when the man was out of sight, creeping stealthily when the path lay in the broadening light of the day. It seemed to him that they had been running for four hours, but as a matter of fact it was less than two since leaving the camp, when the man caught sight of Jack and realized that a stranger was on his trail. With a gesture of rage he turned and disappeared from view.

Here was Jack's chance to think quick. "He may be waiting to shoot me or hit me with a stone," he said, "but I must go on." When he reached the point where the

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stranger had disappeared he was at momentary loss. "He has hidden to throw me off the track, but he wouldn't have gone over this rough ground if his claim were not up this creek." So he kept on up the path, which was hardly more than a game-trail and showed no fresh use.

A little later he reasoned: "If he has made a détour to throw me off the track, then I need not hurry."

But at this precise moment, even as he decided to take it easy, hoarse yells arose behind him, and Carney and two other men came into view. And almost at the same instant the man with the white hat discovered himself on a ridge to the north in the hope to guide his friends, who were behind and without leadership.

Carney, with long legs moving like the cranks on an engine, came up, his head bare, his face livid and covered with scratches.

"After him, boy!" he gasped.

Jack's little rest had refreshed him wonderfully, and he made directly for the spot where the guide had last presented himself.

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Carney's certainty of tone led him to believe that in that direction the gold lay. Topping the ridge he saw the white hat among the willows of another creek, which seemed to come in at right angles from the north. In a flash Jack knew where he was. Carney's map was right. The discovery was on this creek, and not on the larger one he had followed so long.

Down the slope he bounded, followed by the man from Idaho and two of the other party, tearing through the willows like a frightened, fleeing bear. The branches slashed his face and reft his hat away, but he could not stop to regain it. Carney fell behind, but one of the other men, a young fellow with a smile of confidence on his face, drew steadily nearer. "You're a good boy," he called out, gaspingly, "but I've got you. I take first place."

The tone of *camaraderie*, as of one college athlete to another, put a last spurt into Jack's limbs, but his rival passed him and he became second in the race. A few minutes later he saw the man in the white hat standing upon

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a heap of dirt in a willow flat, and Jack perceived the goal of the race. The placer ground was under his feet.

"Take the one above," shouted the man; but Jack's rival halted where he stood, and said, "Here is my claim."

The creek made a wide bend at this point, and Jack stopped a few hundred feet away and said, "I'll take this."

Carney came up a moment later. His quick eye measured the distance. "You're all right, boy. Drive your stake. That claim between belongs to the queen. I'll take the second one below." And away he stumbled, spent with his toil.

Cutting a willow wand, Jack split it and thrust a sheet of paper into it. "I claim this, the Second Claim below Discovery, on this the 29th of August, 1898," and signed it, "Jack Henderson, Pine City, N. W. Ter."

As he stood there beside his proclamation, the boy's heart swelled with pride and satisfaction. It was all quite as fine, as stirring, as dramatic as he had dreamed it might be. The golden sand was under his feet, and he

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had won it by the speed of his own limbs, the power of his own pulse. He had justified himself to Owen, to his mother, and to Mason, who had shielded him so often on the Long Trail.

XIX

JACK WINS HIS GOLD

AS the other men came limping in and Mason did not, Jack began to wonder what could have happened to his partner. Carney, who had carried a hatchet throughout all his run, and who was now busy cutting stakes and measuring off their claims, refused to be in the least alarmed by the plainsman's non-appearance. "Them cow-punchers can't run any more'n a goose," said he, "but they can take care o' themselves. He'll turn up later. Our business is to nail these claims."

The man above them was very angry and called some insulting names, but Carney paid no attention to him. "The alternate claims belong to the crown," he said. "These fellows don't know it, but they do. Let 'em howl."

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As they worked on busily other runners came panting up, and ranged themselves up and down the stream, most of them taking good-naturedly what was left. So far as they were concerned the race had been fair; only the discoverer and his four or five cronies felt aggrieved.

Jack grew more and more uneasy about Mason, but dared not leave his claim till it was entirely staked out, and Carney having advised him to keep himself in evidence, he stood on the bank near the tree upon which he had written a second notice of his claim, but his eyes were turned constantly towards the west and south, hoping each moment to see Mason appear.

It was absurd, of course, but he had a feeling that the trailer had met with some mishap or had lost the direction in his hurry. "I must go see," he said to himself.

At last, when both claims were completely bounded by stakes, Carney came to where Jack stood and said, "Have you any idea where you lost your hat?"

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"Yes; it was where I first struck the willows along the creek."

"Well, I'll hold down the claims while you go look for the hat."

"The hat doesn't matter, but I am anxious to know where Mason is. I'd like to go look for him, if you'll watch my claim."

"All right. Suppose you go down this creek. Maybe he struck in lower down the creek and is holding a claim there."

This seemed a reasonable supposition, and Jack hurried away on his errand, passing one after another of the miners who had made the run. They were all in good spirits and greeted him gayly. "Hello, boy! Did you get in on it?"

"I got the second below," he replied, proudly.

"Well, well! You must be a professional sprinter. Where's your hat?"

"I don't know. Somewhere on the landscape back of me."

As the stream descended it fell into broken land and at last foamed through a granite pass into a deep ravine. It was in this

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ravine that Jack came upon Mason sitting beside the water laving a wounded knee. At Jack's shout he looked up and smiled, pointing in dumb show at his battered leg.

"How are you?" Jack breathlessly asked, as he ran up.

"I'm hocked," responded the trailer. "Been riding bucking broncos all my life without turning a hair, and here I go afoot and tumble down a slide and smash a knee. That's what comes of a horseman trying to be a farmer. How did you come out?"

"I got the second claim below. And half of it's yours, of course."

"Is it on this same creek?"

"Yes, about a mile above here."

"Anybody got this claim?"

Jack looked about him at the rocky gorge, and replied, "No, all the fellows are above."

"Well, then," said Mason, "I take this claim. While I've been sitting here doctoring my bruise I've been figuring. I says to myself, if there *is* any gold on this creek some of it has washed into these pot-holes. Notice, there are three of them. Well, the more

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you fellows dig and wash above, the more I catch, see!"

Jack, now taking special notice, perceived that the creek fell from the comparatively level land above into a deep pool in the granite, and from that into a second, and finally into a third. His mind seized upon the possibility. If this torrent had been washing gold from the heights above during the countless ages of the past, why should it not have deposited the golden sand, some part of it at least, in these holes in the rock? The thought was stirring, and he turned to Mason with shining face. "Maybe your fall was a piece of good luck after all."

Mason rose stiffly. "Well, I reckon it's my only show so far as this creek is concerned. I'm going to stick a stake and claim it, anyway."

He was very lame and could hardly hobble, but with Jack's help he affixed a notice to a tree, and then they walked slowly up the creek.

Mason was not gay. "The worst of it is," he said, "I can't do any work for a week, and

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no packing for a month, and we need our outfit the worst kind, and time is precious."

"Don't you worry," replied Jack, stoutly. "I'll get that outfit over here."

Upon reaching the claim he went to bring Carney, and they all sat down to eat their lunch. It was about nine o'clock, and they were very hungry and tired.

During the meal Carney said: "Youngster, we've got to go to camp and back before sundown. It's our business to be on these claims to-night. We mustn't take any risks."

"I hate to leave you," Jack said to Mason.

"Never mind me. You go and bring some grub. Don't load yourself down with the tent and extra bedding. Bring flour and bacon. We'll rough it for a day or two without a tent."

On the way back Jack found his hat, and took this as another sign of good luck. They reached the camp at noon. Every one was deeply excited over the rush, and many were preparing to break camp and seek the new field.

Tired as he was, Jack's heart was stout, and

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the pack he shouldered was almost as big as Carney's. "Mason must have a good warm bed," he said to himself, as he put in an extra blanket.

His burden grew heavier each mile and his strength dwindled alarmingly. His rests became more and more frequent, until it seemed as though he could not possibly stagger under his load; and at last he fell behind.

Carney went on without a word, and though Jack could not blame him, he felt deserted.

Others passed in silence, leaving him toiling up the rocks and over the slippery pine-needles. Even had he been fresh the load would not have been light, and now the lack of a full night's sleep and exhaustion of the run began to make him tremble. However, his courage was not lost, and though forced to lean against a tree every few rods he plodded slowly on, while the sun sank lower and evening stillness settled over the world of pine and stream. Weary as he was he acknowledged the charm of it all, and took a boyish satisfaction in the conviction that he was doing "the real thing."

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He met his Waterloo in a long, pine-clad ridge which confronted him at right angles like a wall. He was so weak and his shoe-soles so slippery that to ascend was a struggle. Twice he slipped, toppled, and rolled down helplessly, and the second time he lay there battered and bewildered, not realizing where he was. When consciousness fully returned he wondered how he was to go around this obstruction. At last he heard a shout, but did not at first reply, for he was not sure the call was intended for him. At the second hallo he recognized Carney's voice and feebly responded to it.

Guided by the boy's replies, Carney came over the ridge and down to where the exhausted lad lay completely vanquished, fairly pinned to earth by his pack.

"Hello, son, how you making it?" the big miner asked, jovially.

"Not very well. My shoes are so slippery."

"Did ye fall? Are ye hurt?"

"No, I guess not. Yes, I fell. Guess I bumped my head. I'm kind o' turned round. All I know is I ought to go up that hill."

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"Pretty hard day for you," Carney said, as he took the pack. "Can you walk?"

Jack rose stiffly. "Oh yes, and I guess I can carry part of that pack, too."

"If you carry yourself you'll do well, my lad. You're done out. Come on; it's only a little ways now."

Together they wiggled up the ravine till an easier slope presented itself, and so, just at dusk, they came in sight of Mason's fire, and its cheery sparkle was as hospitable as an open door.

The trailer looked up at Jack's pale face and seemed to understand. "Good thing we don't have to do this reglar," he said.

Jack managed to smile. "This beats foot-ball all out."

"You'll forget the whole trip to-morrow morning," Carney assured him. "Sleep is all you need. Well, so long, boys. I must get my watch-fire going," and off he went, without listening to Jack's grateful murmur of thanks.

During the next four days the young miner packed in all the outfit, while Mason, who

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was able to hobble about, built a sort of hunter's lodge to shield them from the cold.

The whole creek was now lined with men busy constructing cabins against the winter that was swiftly coming. They all found time now and again to pan dirt on their claims, and colors were reported thick. Discovery Claim was rich in gold quite as good as the one in Pine Creek, so far as could be judged from the small amount of dirt washed out. A nugget or two of good size added to the excitement of the camp, which was now called Caribou.

Mason decided that no one would trouble his "pot-hole proposition," and as his lameness permitted began a comfortable log-cabin for Jack's claim. "We don't want to forget that we're in the north," he said, sagely. There was a tremendous lot of labor involved in building, for the only tools were the cross-cut saw and the axe, but at last they found themselves under a roof and ready to work their claim. Regretfully they admitted that winter was close at hand and their sluices not yet ready.

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They toiled sixteen hours each day, but toiled joyfully, and at last were ready to sluice their claim. The question was one of attaining bed-rock. And the pit they dug seemed to promise better dirt the deeper they went. But then placer-mining was, after all, a gamble—a chance. All depended on the swish in the current of the far-off glacial stream. “We may strike a pocket and we may not,” said Mason.

One cold day when the ice was thick along the edges of the stream they turned the water for the first time into their sluice-box, and began throwing in the dirt which they had scraped from the bottom of the pit. They shovelled like demons all day, for the sky was gray and snow threatened. They worked in silence, so much depended on the results of the day’s toil.

When all the mound was gone they leaped into the pit and dug under the bank, scraping the bed-rock to keep the water at work till the chill of evening was in the air.

Then Mason, with a face graver than he had ever shown, and with almost a tremor in



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his voice, called out: "Well, boy, here we show our hands. You go up and turn the water off. If I find anything I'll yell; if I don't—I'll drop in my tracks."

Jack's heart was throbbing painfully as he stooped over the little gate and shut off the water. He waited, with a big lump in his throat, and a kind of quiver in his breath. At last the box was empty.

Then Mason yelled, uttering a whoop like a crazy Comanche—an outcry that reached the men above and below and started them on the run "to see what was up."

Jack covered the distance between himself and his partner in a swift run. Mason, bare-headed, and with both hands full of gravel, shouted, breathlessly: "We've got it, son; we've got the stuff. See it?"

He opened his hands and Jack saw amid the mud and pebbles the gleam of the same peculiar, flat, scale-like nuggets which Pine Creek yielded. Then he, too, yelled with joy.

Carney came rushing with eager inquiry, and seemed heartily glad at their good-fort-

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une. "That beats my showing," he said. "It's a green-horn for luck, every time."

"This fixes us for the winter," said Mason, "even if it freezes solid to-night."

"I'm going to write to mother and the boys, this minute," said Jack, eager to share his good-fortune with those so anxiously waiting to hear from him.

The weight of the day's clean-up was estimated at four hundred dollars, and the biggest nugget of all Jack gave to Carney, whose guidance had made this good-fortune possible. "I'd never got here if it hadn't been for you," he said.

XX

THE WINTER OF WAITING

EVERY one was well aware that when the streams began to freeze mining would be over for the following five months, and so every available hand was put to shovelling in the pits and trenches in order that gold for winter expenses might be secured.

"We can chink up cabins after the snow comes," Carney said.

Mason was of this mind. "I'm not afraid of cold and snow," he explained to Jack, "but we must pack in our winter supplies before we are shut in. I figure that it can't be so horrible cold in here. We're too close to the coast for that; but I think I see a whole lot of snow falling, and I'm no snowshoe expert. I reckon it's up to you to get skilful in that kind of locomotion—but not

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now. It's us to the bed-rock so long as the water will run."

He was right about the climate. It was surprisingly mild for a country so far north, and as they were not high above the sea, the autumn ran on very pleasantly well into November. This enabled them to take out sufficient gold to pay for their supplies. But the snow came at last, cutting off all mining.

The very next day after the first storm Mason, with shrewd business sense, bought the only horse in the camp and announced himself as a packer. "I'm not much of a miner or foot-racer," said he, "but right here I shine."

There were tons of supplies piled up on the bank of the lake, and it was essential that they be carried over the trails to the cabins on the new creek. And so, while Jack chopped wood and watched over their small hoard, the trailer ran to and fro between the camp and Atlin, transporting goods and making very good wages by reason of his skill and physical endurance. "For a cow-

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man I think I'm a wonder," he said to Jack, with a comical inflection.

It would have been lonely business for the boy had it not been for Carney. Often Mason was prevented from sleeping at the cabin, and Jack was left with only his stout heart to keep him company. At such times the sight of the light in Carney's cabin was a great comfort. He frequently went over to invite the Idaho man to supper, and Carney was always glad to come.

The boy's fame as a cook was spreading, and as he had offers to become *chef* in two of the eating-houses of the camp, Mason again approached the matter of starting a restaurant. "This gold-hunting," he said, "is a gamble, but feeding people isn't; it's a cinch. And after I get over this rush of packing mebbe it would be good business to open a 'pie-joint,' just for fancy chuck. You could charge high for it."

Jack didn't quite like to do this, for several reasons, but the principal objection lay in his belief that they had a very rich claim and that they should be ready to go to work on

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it again early in the spring. Therefore he answered:

"I'll take your place packing, but I believe we'd better keep out of the hotel business."

Mason had devised a long and flexible sleigh which would run in the trail, and on this he packed his loads from the end of the wagon-road to the new strike. It was not difficult to "tote" goods in this way, and Jack occasionally took his place (in fair weather), and found it a great relief from the monotony of life about the cabin. He heard regularly from home, too, and that helped him bear the long winter.

It was not so dark as he had feared it would be. The moon and stars made the nights brilliant, and the sun, even in midwinter, looked in with cheery face for a few hours of each day, and the unstained snow, so deep and feathery everywhere, added to the charm of the landscape. It was all white and bronze-green, this earth, and the skies at morning and evening were gorgeous with color. Truly it was a beautiful world, and had he not been so anxious to mine, each

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day would have been a joyous march of hours.

The sterling worth of Mason's character came out in this winter, with its temptations to drink and gamble. He not only kept a firm grip on himself, but rescued Carney from the gamesters and helped him to keep clear of the saloons, which he admitted had more than once got all his earnings.

One day a big Siwash (Indian) came to Jack and said: "Me Joe Boston. Me good man. Me hungily. Got no lifle (rifle). You bolly one me go kill callyboo."

Jack understood that he wanted to borrow his rifle to kill a caribou, but he was afraid to loan it. However, he gave the old fellow a good dinner and so made him his friend.

Joe was short and strong, and looked and talked very much like a Chinaman. He seemed to enjoy his meal very much, and though he did not beg any more, he hung silently about all the afternoon, plainly hoping that the boy would relent and let him have the gun.

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At last Jack said: "Me ask my partner. Mebbe so he say yes. Come to-morrow."

Joe nodded and went away.

When Mason returned Jack told him what the Indian wanted. "What do you think about it? He said he'd give us half the meat."

Mason mused. "There's something queer about Injuns. You trust them and they'll do the square thing. I never knew a States Injun to break his promise, and they say these Siwashes are just as straight. These Hudson Bay people trust 'em. I'll chance it if you don't want to do it."

"I do!" said Jack. "I like the old fellow, and I felt like trusting him all along, only I was afraid you'd laugh at me."

When Joe came next morning Jack not only lent him the gun, but put up some bread and bacon for lunch. "You good man, Joe. I trust you."

As the old Siwash grasped the gun his powerful frame grew tense and his black eyes glittered. "Me big hunter. Me bling cally-boo." It was plain he felt the old-time fervor

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of the chase and enjoyed the sense of being trusted.

He was gone nearly three days; but towards night of the third day, just when Jack began to be uneasy about his investment, the hunter came staggering up to the door bearing the bulk of a monster caribou on his back. As he threw down his burden his tired face lighted up. "Me tired. Me likum whiskey."

"No whiskey, Joe — coffee — heap coffee. Hyu pot-latch."

"All light," he said, resignedly, and came in to rest and drink his coffee, while Jack fried some of the caribou and gave him a bountiful feast.

"Skookum water," he exclaimed, as the coffee began to warm his blood. "Skookum chuck." Strong drink, strong food.

When Mason saw the carcass of the caribou he whistled in astonishment. "I've heard you could pack four hundred pounds, Joe, but I didn't believe it. How far you carry him?"

As well as they could understand, Joe had carried the caribou over twenty miles and

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had spent two nights in the snowy wilderness without shelter or blanket. "Me dig hole like mouse. Makem snow blanket," he laughingly explained.

Mason turned to Jack. "I don't think I'll brag any more about my hunting or trailing."

"You never did brag," replied Jack, but he caught his partner's meaning. Joe Boston was in his way a mighty hunter, a hero.

His loyalty to Jack was very touching. All winter he kept the cabin supplied with fresh meat, and Mason was very glad to have him make his home with them. He said he would help dig when the spring came, but Mason said: "You earn your keep, Joe. We've got no kick coming. We'll all be fat as October steers if you keep this up."

In the close intimacy of the life they led, Jack talked much of his plans for helping his mother and sister, and Mason, though he said little, was deeply interested. He confessed that he was partly to blame for the loneliness of his life, for though his mother was dead, his father still lived, a rancher in Montana. And a sister, married and comfortably settled

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in Spokane, had often written to him to visit her. "We used to be great cronies," he said, "but someway, after she married and went to town, seemed like she moved away out of my range. Howsomever, mebbe I'll go back and visit her after the clean-up next fall."

It was in response to Jack's urging that the trailer at last wrote to his sister and father to tell them where he was. Writing was a difficult undertaking for his big, strong fingers, but he did it, and felt mightily relieved thereafter.

The winter passed quickly—much more quickly than Jack had anticipated. It was never really tedious after Joe came, and the cabin was seldom lonely. Sometimes the Siwash took Mason's place in packing, but for the most part he hunted or helped Jack saw lumber or cut wood. The only thing that made the days seem long was the boy's ambition to be at the sluice-boxes again. He wanted to be washing gold.

At last the sun began to grow bolder. Each day he stayed a little longer in the sky, and set a little more reluctantly each night.

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The snow began to melt on the warm slopes under the edge of the pines. The creek in the middle of the day began to roar, cutting the new channel deep under the crusted drifts. The trails of hard-pressed snow began to stand up like railway grades facing new trails; and at last spring came sailing in on the moist coast wind and there was water—water everywhere!

Eager to get at the pay-dirt again, the young miners made every preparation, and at last, while still the trench was full of liquid mud, they drew on their long rubber boots and sprang to their shovels.

Once they had returned to the actual work of mining they no longer gave any thought to the passage of time. They toiled to their limit, from early morning till night, shovelling the pay-gravel into the long riffle-box, and clearing away the bowlders and waste. Joe helped some of the time, but he preferred to hunt or to pack goods—in "toting" he was a giant.

The returns of the claim grew steadily better. They began to clean up of a Saturday

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from six hundred to eight hundred dollars, and they felt justified in hiring men to help them. They built another sluiceway on the opposite side of the creek, and set another gang to work there. This did not pay as well, but from both gangs they cleaned over a thousand dollars each week.

Jack was eager to send some of this money home, but to get it to the coast where it could be shipped by express was a dangerous venture, it seemed to him, although there were men who guaranteed to take it safely to the bank in Skagway.

"Even if it were in the bank there I wouldn't feel safe," Mason admitted. "My notion is that we better stick right here till we make our pile or till things get settled down, and then take our dust and go out with it ourselves—take it right to Seattle."

To this Jack agreed.

Of course this plan involved piling up their treasure in the cabin, but every miner's locker contained a store of gold. Mason had no fear of robbers in the camp. The danger, to his mind, began after the metal left his hands.

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Thieves lurked along the trails, on the boats, and especially in the alleys of Skagway.

"No, boy," said he; "I may be a farmer, but I don't let any other fellow handle my nuggets till I reach Uncle Sam's clerk. The banks in Seattle will do me at a pinch."

The camp grew during the summer, but not as they had expected it to do, and the reason lay in this. Aside from the few claims close to Discovery, the pay-dirt was not rich enough to mine in the old-fashioned way. It was a "hydraulic proposition," as Mason called it. That is to say, it needed a powerful head of water, and a hose capable of washing tons of dirt a minute, in order to be a paying thing.

One by one all the other claims were abandoned, though Mason still had faith in his "pot-hole," and spent long hours planning to go down in a diving-bell or some other way to test the sand at the bottom.

Jack said, "Never mind whether it's any value or not, we've got a good thing here."

Rapidly the bags of gold multiplied, until

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the fame of Jack's claim was almost too great. By July the creek was quite deserted, except for a half-dozen claims close about Discovery No. 1, and Mason began to get a little uneasy.

"It was safe enough so long as the camp was booming, but now when there are so many disappointed chaps pulling out, it's up to us to keep one ear laid back."

They were made more uneasy by Carney, who insisted on having Jack take care of his dust also. His claim was not turning out very well, but he had taken out several hundred dollars' worth of coarse gold.

"I'm a poor hand to keep anything," he explained, a little shamefacedly, "and I wish you'd lay my little pile alongside yours. I reckon I'm in hard luck again. This claim of mine is running more to hard knocks than to nuggets."

Jack was glad to aid Carney in any way, for he was deeply grateful to him, but his bag of treasure added more responsibility than it should have done, and he often thought with a shiver, "What if we *should*

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be robbed? Carney would be totally out." And this fear really gave him more unrest than any consideration of his own loss could do.

He became very anxious, too, about Carney's success. It seemed too bad that the man who had made it possible for him to get his claim should be so unlucky as to fall upon a barren bit of ground.

At last winter began to draw near, and one night with a sounding northern wind roaring in the trees above their cabin, the young miners looked at their store and agreed that the time had come to go out.

"We can work a few days more, but what's the use?" said Mason. "We might as well go out now, before the lake freezes over, for Joe Boston can help us a good deal better with a boat than with a pack. That stuff is going to get mighty heavy before we reach Seattle."

"It figures up about seventy pounds. That's only thirty-five pounds apiece."

"Well, that's a good deal, when you're trying to hide and carry at the same time "

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replied the trailer, sententiously. "But we'll get it out all right. I still think old Joe is our best run o' luck. He'll be able to get us across with a boat—he and some more of his kind; and once we reach Bennett and the railway it's one of us to the watch-tower all the time."

Jack, now that he had really decided to stop work, was seized with a mighty longing to hurry home, and in fancy lived over again and again his meeting with his partners in St. Paul, and with his mother and sister in Cedarbank. "I must get home before Thanksgiving," he said.

"You'll do that easy," was Mason's assuring response.

XXI

PAYING OFF DEBTS

ONE morning in November of this year, George May received a telegram from Jack, saying: "Meet me at the Union Station, Overland Limited—to-night. Tell Owen."

In great excitement George 'phoned to his chum in Minneapolis, and they were pacing the station a full half-hour before the train was due. They could talk of nothing, think of nothing, but the conquering hero and his hoard of gold.

"Isn't it wonderful!" exclaimed Owen. "He said he'd win, and here he comes loaded with the dust."

"You don't suppose he's going to bring the gold in his pockets, do you?" retorted George, half in earnest. "He said they were

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going to bring the gold to Seattle, but I don't think he meant that he would carry it any farther."

Owen referred to the telegram again. "He doesn't say that Mason is coming. I wish he were. I'd like to see 'the trailer.' He's great!"

"I guess he is. Jack owes a good deal to him."

"I hope he'll bring a picture of him, anyway. I'd like to see how he looks."

In such talk they whiled away the half-hour of waiting; and when at last the great engine came puffing slowly in from its mighty run across the plains, the boys thrilled with wordless awe. It seemed like some weary yet majestic beast at the end of a victorious thousand-league race-course. It filled the shed with its hollow, panting roar, resting as if with lax limbs and closed eyes, indifferent to the minute, two-legged insects clambering over it.

The passengers who came hurrying out along the walk all brought the mountain west as a wind in their garments, and the sunlight

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still lay warm on their faces. They were broad-hatted, roughly clad, for the most part miners, cattlemen, many of them, and all horsemen. Not one wore spectacles, and only a few showed the latest style of waistcoat. To the boys who stood waiting they were all adventurers, returning heroes, men of romantic pursuits.

Pressing close to the gate, the young fellows studied the long stream of hurrying humanity, eager to catch first glimpse of their own gold-seeker.

"There he is!" cried out Owen. "And see the mustache!"

"He thinks he's disguised," laughed George.

True enough. Jack had grown a mustache during his absence, but it was hardly large enough or black enough to serve as a disguise.

"Is the gold in the bag!" shouted Owen, as he pounced upon the returned miner.

"Hello, boys!" he answered. "No, it's in a safer place."

"Where's that?"

"Uncle Sam's mint."

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"What have you got to show for it?"

"Drafts on the First National Bank."

"Well, that 'll do," remarked Owen, "but we wanted to see the 'dust.' I hope you brought a little of it—just to show us what it's like."

"That's what I did," replied Jack, putting down his bag.

Thereupon, right in the middle of the big depot swarming with men, he drew a little buckskin bag from his pocket and poured from it a handful of minute, irregular, flat yellow scales, ranging from the size of a flax-seed to the bigness of a finger-nail.

"Is that the way it looks!" exclaimed both the other fellows.

"That's the way it comes, up there on our creek. That's almost pure—worth over eighteen dollars an ounce, just as it is."

"Put it up quick, somebody may see it!" exclaimed George.

Jack laughed. "If you'd helped bring that bag out you would be hardened. I'm not afraid of anybody here, after what I've gone through."

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"Tell us all about it."

"Not here?"

"No, of course not. Come up home; they all want to see you."

Jack found himself a real hero now, and his heart swelled with the joy of it, but he said: "No, boys, I've got to take the first train for home. Let's find a place to eat supper and I'll tell you all about it, and then I must hurry down to see mother—she's waiting for me."

They submitted to his leadership now, and soon they were seated around a table in a near-by hotel and he was ordering costly dishes with easy assurance. While they ate he answered their eager questions about the trip over the pass with the gold.

"As I wrote you, we had over thirty thousand dollars after all bills were paid."

"I don't believe it—I mean, I can't realize it," Owen declared.

Jack drew out two drafts on a St. Paul bank. "My share in the clean-up was sixteen thousand dollars. One-quarter of that is your stake, and here are two drafts for two

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thousand dollars, one for you and one for you," and he turned over the pieces of paper with a flourish. "I guess you'll believe it now."

The boys sat quite stunned, studying the writing on the drafts as if it were Sanscrit or some particularly obscure Latin text.

Jack went on. "Of course we owe almost everything to Mason. I never could have gone through without him. I would have turned back at Fort Wrangell only for him. Boys, he's the greatest trailer and the best fellow in the world. He never gives up, and he never loses his grit. And he took care of me in a way I'll never forget."

"I guess you can't say too much for him," said Owen. "But see here, Jack, I don't think we ought to take all this money. It's more than we deserve."

"That's right," George agreed. "We only put up four hundred dollars—a thousand per cent. is pretty big interest. Half of this would be too much. We didn't really expect you to share with us after all you've gone through."

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Jack was firm. "It's yours according to the agreement, boys, and more, too. It's like this. When I got to Ashcroft I needed every cent you gave me. I couldn't have hit the trail at all without your four hundred dollars. Of course, it would all have been lost after that only for Mason—"

"Well, then, let's give part of it back to him."

"No, that won't do. He wouldn't take it. But see here, fellows, you don't seem to see that this is only the beginning of it. You own a part of the claim, and there's more where this came from. We haven't half worked it out. What I want you to do is to go back and help work the dirt."

"We'll do it!" cried George, banging his fist on the table. "That's exactly what we will do."

"We'll be helping to earn it then; our folks can't object to *this* plan, now that there is a place to go to and some real work to do."

"There's a railway into Bennett now, and steamboats running into Tagish. There isn't any more risk than going to Buffalo."

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"And besides," said Owen, "I graduate next June, anyway. You may depend upon me."

"Very well, that's settled. We will all start back the first day of April."

They all shook hands in deep excitement.

Then Jack said: "Now, partners, there's one thing more. You know about Carney, I wrote you how he helped me get the claim and how he helped me up when I was down and carried my pack? Well, his claim didn't turn out very well, and Mason and I, we want to vote him into our partnership. You see, just when Mason was flat with a smashed leg and I was lying in a ravine too lame to move, Carney helped us. He just about saved the day, and we feel that he ought to share in on our good luck. Now what do you say—you're partners and have a vote in the matter?"

"Why, of course!" cried both the boys, as they rose to the emotion that trembled in Jack's voice. "We felt all along that Carney deserved the best mine on the creek. Make him a partner. It's the only right thing to

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do. Anything you and Mason do we second instantly."

Jack's eyes were suspiciously dim, and he had to blow his nose twice before he was able to go on. "Let's wire Mason at once. George, you write it. Never mind expense; make it a good one. Mason is going back on to-morrow's boat, and he would like to carry the news to Carney."

George got out his pencil. "By-the-way, what's Mason's other name?"

Jack laughed. "Will you believe me, I didn't know myself till we started over the pass. I asked him, and he said if I wouldn't tell any one he'd divulge. 'It's a fool fancy name,' he said. 'I don't know why they loaded me up with it, and I wouldn't tell you only it 'll have to go into our partnership papers. It's Beaufort.'"

"Beaufort!" Owen stared. "How do you spell it?"

Jack spelled it.

"Well, that is a curious name," remarked George—"for a miner."

Jack swore them to secrecy. "Don't let

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any one know; just put it B. Mason in the telegram."

"Did you have any trouble getting the gold out? Tell us all about that. How did you carry it? How much did it weigh?"

"I never was so glad of anything in my life as I was when I shoved my bag into the window of the bank in Seattle and asked the man to weigh it for me."

"Was it heavy?"

"Heavy, well I guess it was. But that didn't bother me so much as the thought of having something in my pack that everybody wanted and that somebody might want to kill me for. We didn't have a minute's peace all the way down. Mason wouldn't turn his over to the purser, and so I didn't. I wish now I had. It spoiled the trip on the boat. Still, I don't know, I guess I'd have worried just the same."

"You wrote that you were going to get an Indian to take you to the railway. How did that come out?"

"Fine! Joe Boston is a wonder. He almost deserves to be a partner. He's staying

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with Carney this winter, looking after the mine. He told us that some fellows at the camp were watching us and that they intended to hold us up on the trail if they could. We didn't know whether this was so or not, but we weren't taking any 'river chances,' as Mason says. We commissioned him to get us to Bennett and he did. He knows every trail in the country, and all the Indians, and we trusted him. He's stout as a moose, too. We pulled out one day at noon without letting any one else know. Joe rowed us across Atlin to a point ten miles below the main landing, and we crossed the hills by a trail no one else knew about. Joe had some Indians over there in Tagish with another boat, and so we slid out, and no one in Pine City or Atlin knew anything about it. We went by water all the rest of the way to Bennett, camping along the bank. Mason and I slept on board every night, anchored out a little ways, and Joe and his men slept on the bank. Even if anybody had known about our gold they couldn't have got at us. We took no chances. We planned it so that we

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landed in Bennett just in time to reach the train for the coast."

"You felt all right then?"

"No. The nearer we got to Skagway, the more nervous Mason got. He's a mountaineer and cow-boy, you know, and he's afraid of towns. And I was scared, too, for Skagway was full of loafers and gamblers. We went to a little hotel and put up for the night. There was to be a boat next day, and one or the other of us stayed in our room with the door locked all the day, and Mason sat up all night with his gun handy. It makes me laugh to think of it now, but it wasn't so funny then."

The other boys looked sober. "I can see it wasn't so funny," said George. "But when ye got on the boat—then you breathed easy, didn't you?"

"We would have done so only we had read in the paper of several miners who got robbed on this very boat on its last trip. Some fellow got into one miner's bag and took out the gold and filled it up with sand; and in another case sack and all disappeared, and

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though they hunted high and low on the boat they never found it."

"How much did the gold weigh—I mean your gold?"

"Over a hundred pounds. I carried thirty pounds and Mason seventy. He wanted to carry more, but I wouldn't let him. I wanted to carry my full share, but finally compromised on thirty. It got pretty heavy, I can tell you. We each put a bag in the centre of a roll of blankets, so that I had about fifty pounds and he had nearly a hundred."

"A hundred pounds! Can a man carry that much?"

"I guess they can. Joe Boston, our Indian guide, can carry three hundred. But, as I say, it wasn't the weight of the gold, it was the feeling that everybody knew about it. It isn't all fun coming out with a lot of gold in your pack. But we didn't have to carry it much, except from Atlin over to Tagish and up to the railway. Oh, but it was a relief when we reached the bank window in Seattle!"

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The boys sat up and stared at their partner in growing admiration. He was no longer an excitable, fervid boy. It was not the mustache that showed the change. The tone of his voice, the bold, confident glance of his eyes, bewildered and silenced them.

"Well, now, about that telegram," he said, breaking the silence.

George bent to his task, and this was the message they sent:

"B. MASON, Steamer *Argonaut*, Seattle.

"We are all very grateful to you. Accept our heart-felt thanks. Make Carney partner, of course. He deserves that, and more too. Take care of yourself.

Your partners,

"GEORGE MAY,

"OWEN GILBERT,

"JACK HENDERSON."

XXII

HOME AGAIN

AND so, now, a year and a half after his cutting loose from Cedarbank, Jack Henderson was returning with a reputation in the village second only to Ole Hanson, the drayman who had made a fortune in a single year on the Klondike. No wonder he alighted from the train with the air of a conqueror.

With boyish love of making his re-entry dramatic, he still wore his threadbare corduroy suit and a rakish, weather-beaten Western hat. He wished his friends to see him in the guise of the real miner, stained, worn, and season-checked.

Mrs. Henderson was waiting on the platform, her hands tremulous with eagerness to touch him again, and as she caught sight of him her eyes filled with glad tears.

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He caught her in his arms and gave her a hug, saying, "Well, mother, I told you I'd win, and I did."

She looked at him long and steadily. "You look just as your father did when I first saw him. What perils you've been through! Praise God, you're safe home at last."

Alice, with all the dignity of a young lady, remarked, with wise, sisterly air: "Yes, you've succeeded, but I think you owe a great deal of it to that wonderful trailer you wrote so much about. Why didn't you bring him with you?"

"I wanted to," Jack replied, "but he's shy as a fox when you get him into town. You're right, I owe pretty much everything to him, and if he were here now I would be perfectly happy."

"Where's my necklace?" Alice pursued.

He pulled a box from his pocket. "Here it is."

"Don't open it here!" cried Mrs. Henderson.

"Of course not," said Alice. "But let's

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hurry home; I'm wild to see it. If it isn't a nice one I'll send you back for another."

Jack could hardly reach his mother's gate, so many were the friends who came out to greet him; and at last Alice hurried on ahead to examine her present. She came running back a few minutes later, her eyes dancing with delight, the string of nuggets about her neck.

"I believe it now," she said, as she gave Jack another hug. "Yes, it must be true. It is beautiful! I wish we could thank your friend Mason—"

"We can. Let's telegraph him; he leaves to-morrow for Skagway."

And this was the message that Mason got, as he entered his state-room the next day:

"May continued good-fortune attend you. We thank you from the depths of our hearts. Come and see us next time.

"Gratefully yours,

"Mrs. HENDERSON,

"ALICE HENDERSON."

To this Mason replied in words that showed that his lonely heart was touched:

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"Jack earned his passage all right. He's a thorough-bred. No mean streak in him. Much obliged for invitation. May drop in sometime next year."

THE RETURN OF A PRIVATE

*“On the road leading ‘back to
God’s country’ and wife and
babies”*

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THE nearer the train drew toward La Crosse, the soberer the little group of "vets" became. On the long way from New Orleans they had beguiled tedium with jokes and friendly chaff; or with planning with elaborate detail what they were going to do now, after the war. A long journey, slowly, irregularly, yet persistently pushing northward. When they entered on Wisconsin territory they gave a cheer, and another when they reached Madison, but after that they sank into a dumb expectancy. Comrades dropped off at one or two points beyond, until there were only four or five left who were bound for LaCrosse County.

Three of them were gaunt and brown, the fourth was gaunt and pale, with signs of fever and ague upon him. One had a great scar down

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his temple, one limped, and they all had unnaturally large, bright eyes, showing emaciation. There were no bands greeting them at the station, no banks of gayly dressed ladies waving handkerchiefs and shouting "Bravo!" as they came in on the caboose of a freight train into the towns that had cheered and blared at them on their way to war. As they looked out or stepped upon the platform for a moment, while the train stood at the station, the loafers looked at them indifferently. Their blue coats, dusty and grimy, were too familiar now to excite notice, much less a friendly word. They were the last of the army to return, and the loafers were surfeited with such sights.

The train jogged forward so slowly that it seemed likely to be midnight before they should reach LaCrosse. The little squad grumbled and swore, but it was no use; the train would not hurry, and, as a matter of fact, it was nearly two o'clock when the engine whistled "down brakes."

All of the group were farmers, living in districts several miles out of the town, and all were poor.

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"Now, boys," said Private Smith, he of the fever and ague, "we are landed in LaCrosse in the night. We've got to stay somewhere till mornin'. Now I ain't got no two dollars to waste on a hotel. I've got a wife and children, so I'm goin' to roost on a bench and take the cost of a bed out of my hide."

"Same here," put in one of the other men. "Hide'll grow on again, dollars'll come hard. It's goin' to be mighty hot skirmishin' to find a dollar these days."

"Don't think they'll be a deputation of citizens waitin' to 'scort us to a hotel, eh?" said another. His sarcasm was too obvious to require an answer.

Smith went on, "Then at daybreak we'll start for home—at least, I will."

"Well, I'll be dummed if I'll take two dollars out o' *my* hide," one of the younger men said. "I'm goin' to a hotel, if I don't never lay up a cent."

"That'll do f'r you," said Smith; "but if you had a wife an' three young uns dependin' on yeh——"

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"Which I ain't, thank the Lord! and don't intend havin' while the court knows itself."

The station was deserted, chill, and dark, as they came into it at exactly a quarter to two in the morning. Lit by the oil lamps that flared a dull red light over the dingy benches, the waiting room was not an inviting place. The younger man went off to look up a hotel, while the rest remained and prepared to camp down on the floor and benches. Smith was attended to tenderly by the other men, who spread their blankets on the bench for him, and, by robbing themselves, made quite a comfortable bed, though the narrowness of the bench made his sleeping precarious.

It was chill, though August, and the two men, sitting with bowed heads, grew stiff with cold and weariness, and were forced to rise now and again and walk about to warm their stiffened limbs. It did not occur to them, probably, to contrast their coming home with their going forth, or with the coming home of the generals, colonels, or even captains—but to Private Smith, at any rate, there came a sickness at

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heart almost deadly as he lay there on his hard bed and went over his situation.

In the deep of the night, lying on a board in the town where he had enlisted three years ago, all elation and enthusiasm gone out of him, he faced the fact that with the joy of home-coming was already mingled the bitter juice of care. He saw himself sick, worn out, taking up the work on his half-cleared farm, the inevitable mortgage standing ready with open jaw to swallow half his earnings. He had given three years of his life for a mere pittance of pay, and now! ——

Morning dawned at last, slowly, with a pale yellow dome of light rising silently above the bluffs, which stand like some huge storm-devastated castle, just east of the city. Out to the left the great river swept on its massive yet silent way to the south. Bluejays called across the water from hillside to hillside through the clear, beautiful air, and hawks began to skim the tops of the hills. The older men were astir early, but Private Smith had fallen at last into a sleep, and they went out without waking him. He lay on his knapsack, his gaunt face turned

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toward the ceiling, his hands clasped on his breast, with a curious pathetic effect of weakness and appeal.

An engine switching near woke him at last, and he slowly sat up and stared about. He looked out of the window and saw that the sun was lightening the hills across the river. He rose and brushed his hair as well as he could, folded his blankets up, and went out to find his companions. They stood gazing silently at the river and at the hills.

"Looks natcher'l, don't it?" they said, as he came out.

"That's what it does," he replied. "An' it looks good. D' yeh see that peak?" He pointed at a beautiful symmetrical peak, rising like a slightly truncated cone, so high that it seemed the very highest of them all. It was touched by the morning sun and it glowed like a beacon, and a light scarf of gray morning fog was rolling up its shadowed side.

"My farm's just beyond that. Now, if I can only ketch a ride, we'll be home by dinner-time."

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"I'm talkin' about breakfast," said one of the others.

"I guess it's one more meal o' hardtack f'r me," said Smith.

They foraged around, and finally found a restaurant with a sleepy old German behind the counter, and procured some coffee, which they drank to wash down their hardtack.

"Time'll come," said Smith, holding up a piece by the corner, "when this'll be a curiosity."

"I hope to God it will! I bet I've chewed hardtack enough to shingle every house in the coolly. I've chewed it when my lampers' was down, and when they wasn't. I've took it dry, soaked, and mashed. I've had it wormy, musty, sour, and blue-mouldy. I've had it in little bits and big bits; 'fore coffee an' after coffee. I'm ready f'r a change. I'd like t' git holt jest about now o' some of the hot biscuits my wife c'n make when she lays herself out f'r company."

"Well, if you set there gabblin', you'll never *see* yer wife."

"Come on," said Private Smith. "Wait a moment, boys; less take suthin'. It's on me."

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He led them to the rusty tin dipper which hung on a nail beside the wooden water-pail, and they grinned and drank. Then shouldering their blankets and muskets, which they were "takin' home to the boys," they struck out on their last march.

"They called that coffee Jayvy," grumbled one of them, "but it never went by the road where government Jayvy resides. I reckon I know coffee from peas."

They kept together on the road along the turnpike, and up the winding road by the river, which they followed for some miles. The river was very lovely, curving down along its sandy beds, pausing now and then under broad basswood trees, or running in dark, swift, silent currents under tangles of wild grapevines, and drooping alders, and haw trees. At one of these lovely spots the three vets sat down on the thick green sward to rest, "on Smith's account." The leaves of the trees were as fresh and green as in June, the jays called cheery greetings to them, and kingfishers darted to and fro with swooping, noiseless flight.

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"I tell yeh, boys, this knocks the swamps of Loueesiana into kingdom come."

"You bet. All they c'n raise down there is snakes, niggers, and p'rticler hell."

"An' fightin' men," put in the older man.

"An' fightin' men. If I had a good hook an' line I'd sneak a pick'rel out o' that pond. Say, remember that time I shot that alligator——"

"I guess we'd better be crawlin' along," interrupted Smith, rising and shouldering his knapsack, with considerable effort, which he tried to hide.

"Say, Smith, lemme give you a lift on that."

"I guess I c'n manage," said Smith, grimly.

"Course. But, yo' see, I may not have a chance right off to pay yeh back for the times you've carried my gun and hull caboodle. Say, now, gimme that gun, anyway."

"All right, if yeh feel like it, Jim," Smith replied, and they trudged along doggedly in the sun, which was getting higher and hotter each half-mile.

"Ain't it queer there ain't no teams comin' along," said Smith, after a long silence.

"Well, no, seein's it's Sunday."

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"By jinks, that's a fact. It *is* Sunday. I'll git home in time f'r dinner, sure!" he exulted. "She lon't hev dinner usially till about *one* on Sundays." And he fell into a muse, in which he smiled.

"Well, I'll git home jest about six o'clock, jest about when the boys are milkin' the cows," said old Jim Cranby. "I'll step into the barn, an' then I'll say: 'Heah! why ain't this milkin' done before this time o' day?' An' then won't they yell!" he added, slapping his thigh in great glee.

Smith went on. "I'll jest go up the path. Old Rover'll come down the road to meet me. He won't bark; he'll know me, an' he'll come down waggin' his tail an' showin' his teeth. That's his way of laughin'. An' so I'll walk up to the kitchen door, an' I'll say, '*Dinner* f'r a hungry man!' An' then she'll jump up, an' ——"

He couldn't go on. His voice choked at the thought of it. Saunders, the third man, hardly uttered a word, but walked silently behind the others. He had lost his wife the first year he was in the army. She died of pneumonia, caught

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in the autumn rains while working in the fields in his place.

They plodded along till at last they came to a parting of the ways. To the right the road continued up the main valley; to the left it went over the big ridge.

"Well, boys," began Smith, as they grounded their muskets and looked away up the valley, "here's where we shake hands. We've marched together a good many miles, an' now I s'pose we're done."

"Yes, I don't think we'll do any more of it f'r a while. I don't want to, I know."

"I hope I'll see yeh once in a while, boys, to talk over old times."

"Of course," said Saunders, whose voice trembled a little, too. "It ain't *exactly* like dyin'." They all found it hard to look at each other.

"But we'd ought'r go home with you," said Cranby. "You'll never climb that ridge with all them things on yer back."

"Oh, I'm all right! Don't worry about me. Every step takes me nearer home, yeh see. Well, good-by, boys."

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They shook hands. "Good-by. Good luck!"

"Same to you. Lemme know how you find things at home."

"Good-by."

"Good-by."

He turned once before they passed out of sight, and waved his cap, and they did the same, and all yelled. Then all marched away with their long, steady, loping, veteran step. The solitary climber in blue walked on for a time, with his mind filled with the kindness of his comrades, and musing upon the many wonderful days they had had together in camp and field.

He thought of his chum, Billy Tripp. Poor Billy! A "minie" ball fell into his breast one day, fell wailing like a cat, and tore a great ragged hole in his heart. He looked forward to a sad scene with Billy's mother and sweetheart. They would want to know all about it. He tried to recall all that Billy had said, and the particulars of it, but there was little to remember, just that wild wailing sound high in the air, a dull slap, a short, quick, expulsive groan, and the boy lay with his face in the dirt

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in the ploughed field they were marching across.

That was all. But all the scenes he had since been through had not dimmed the horror, the terror of that moment, when his boy comrade fell, with only a breath between a laugh and a death-groan. Poor handsome Billy! Worth millions of dollars was his young life.

These sombre recollections gave way at length to more cheerful feelings as he began to approach his home coolly. The fields and houses grew familiar, and in one or two he was greeted by people seated in the doorways. But he was in no mood to talk, and pushed on steadily, though he stopped and accepted a drink of milk once at the well-side of a neighbor.

The sun was burning hot on that slope, and his step grew slower, in spite of his iron resolution. He sat down several times to rest. Slowly he crawled up the rough, reddish-brown road, which wound along the hillside, under great trees, through dense groves of jack oaks, with tree-tops far below him on his left hand, and

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the hills far above him on his right. He crawled along like some minute, wingless variety of fly.

He ate some hardtack, sauced with wild berries, when he reached the summit of the ridge, and sat there for some time, looking down into his home coolly.

Sombre, pathetic figure! His wide, round, gray eyes gazing down into the beautiful valley, seeing and not seeing, the splendid cloud-shadows sweeping over the western hills and across the green and yellow wheat far below. His head drooped forward on his palm, his shoulders took on a tired stoop, his cheek-bones showed painfully. An observer might have said, "He is looking down upon his own grave."

II

Sunday comes in a Western wheat harvest with such sweet and sudden relaxation to man and beast that it would be holy for that reason, if for no other, and Sundays are usually fair in harvest-time. As one goes out into the field in the hot morning sunshine, with no sound abroad save the crickets and the indescribably

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pleasant silken rustling of the ripened grain, the reaper and the very sheaves in the stubble seem to be resting, dreaming.

Around the house, in the shade of the trees, the men sit, smoking, dozing, or reading the papers, while the women, never resting, move about at the housework. The men eat on Sundays about the same as on other days, and breakfast is no sooner over and out of the way than dinner begins.

But at the Smith farm there were no men dozing or reading. Mrs. Smith was alone with her three children, Mary, nine, Tommy, six, and little Ted, just past four. Her farm, rented to a neighbor, lay at the head of a coolly or narrow gully, made at some far-off post-glacial period by the vast and angry floods of water which gullied these tremendous furrows in the level prairie—furrows so deep that undisturbed portions of the original level rose like hills on either side, rose to quite considerable mountains.

The chickens wakened her as usual that Sabbath morning from dreams of her absent husband, from whom she had not heard for weeks.

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The shadows drifted over the hills, down the slopes, across the wheat, and up the opposite wall in leisurely way, as if, being Sunday, they could take it easy also. The fowls clustered about the housewife as she went out into the yard. Fuzzy little chickens swarmed out from the coops, where their clucking and perpetually disgruntled mothers tramped about, petulantly thrusting their heads through the spaces between the slats.

A cow called in a deep, musical bass, and a calf answered from a little pen near by, and a pig scurried guiltily out of the cabbages. Seeing all this, seeing the pig in the cabbages, the tangle of grass in the garden, the broken fence which she had mended again and again—the little woman, hardly more than a girl, sat down and cried. The bright Sabbath morning was only a mockery without him!

A few years ago they had bought this farm, paying part, mortgaging the rest in the usual way. Edward Smith was a man of terrible energy. He worked "nights and Sundays," as the saying goes, to clear the farm of its brush and of its insatiate mortgage! In the midst of

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his Herculean struggle came the call for volunteers, and with the grim and unselfish devotion to his country which made the Eagle Brigade able to "whip its weight in wild-cats," he threw down his scythe and grub-axe, turned his cattle loose, and became a blue-coated cog in a vast machine for killing men, and not thistles. While the millionaire sent his money to England for safe-keeping, this man, with his girl-wife and three babies, left them on a mortgaged farm, and went away to fight for an idea. It was foolish, but it was sublime for all that.

That was three years before, and the young wife, sitting on the well-curb on this bright Sabbath harvest morning, was righteously rebellious. It seemed to her that she had borne her share of the country's sorrow. Two brothers had been killed, the renter in whose hands her husband had left the farm had proved a villain; one year the farm had been without crops, and now the overripe grain was waiting the tardy hand of the neighbor who had rented it, and who was cutting his own grain first.

About six weeks before, she had received a

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letter saying, "We'll be discharged in a little while." But no other word had come from him. She had seen by the papers that his army was being discharged, and from day to day other soldiers slowly percolated in blue streams back into the State and county, but still *her* hero did not return.

Each week she had told the children that he was coming, and she had watched the road so long that it had become unconscious; and as she stood at the well, or by the kitchen door, her eyes were fixed unthinkingly on the road that wound down the coolly.

Nothing wears on the human soul like waiting. If the stranded mariner, searching the sun-bright seas, could once give up hope of a ship, that horrible grinding on his brain would cease. It was this waiting, hoping, on the edge of despair, that gave Emma Smith no rest.

Neighbors said, with kind intentions: "He's sick, maybe, an' can't start north just yet. He'll come along one o' these days."

"Why don't he write?" was her question, which silenced them all. This Sunday morning it seemed to her as if she could not stand it

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longer. The house seemed intolerably lonely. So she dressed the little ones in their best calico dresses and home-made jackets, and, closing up the house, set off down the coolly to old Mother Gray's.

"Old Widder Gray" lived at the "mouth of the coolly." She was a widow woman with a large family of stalwart boys and laughing girls. She was the visible incarnation of hospitality and optimistic poverty. With Western open-heartedness she fed every mouth that asked food of her, and worked herself to death as cheerfully as her girls danced in the neighborhood harvest dances.

She waddled down the path to meet Mrs. Smith with a broad smile on her face.

"Oh, you little dears! Come right to your granny. Gimme a kiss! Come right in, Mis' Smith. How are yeh, anyway? Nice mornin', ain't it? Come in an' set down. Everything's in a clutter, but that won't scare you any."

She led the way into the best room, a sunny, square room, carpeted with a faded and patched rag carpet, and papered with white-and-green-striped wall-paper, where a few

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faded effigies of dead members of the family hung in variously sized oval walnut frames. The house resounded with singing, laughter, whistling, tramping of heavy boots, and riotous scufflings. Half-grown boys came to the door and crooked their fingers at the children, who ran out, and were soon heard in the midst of the fun.

"Don't s'pose you've heard from Ed?" Mrs. Smith shook her head. "He'll turn up some day, when you ain't lookin' for 'm." The good old soul had said that so many times that poor Mrs. Smith derived no comfort from it any longer.

"Liz heard from Al the other day. He's comin' some day this week. Anyhow, they expect him."

"Did he say anything of ——"

"No, he didn't," Mrs. Gray admitted. "But then it was only a short letter, anyhow. Al ain't much for writin', anyhow.— But come out and see my new cheese. I tell yeh, I don't believe I ever had better luck in my life. If Ed should come, I want you should take him up a piece of this cheese."

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It was beyond human nature to resist the influence of that noisy, hearty, loving household, and in the midst of the singing and laughing the wife forgot her anxiety, for the time at least, and laughed and sang with the rest.

About eleven o'clock a wagon-load more drove up to the door, and Bill Gray, the widow's oldest son, and his whole family, from Sand Lake Coolly, piled out amid a good-natured uproar. Every one talked at once, except Bill, who sat in the wagon with his wrists on his knees, a straw in his mouth, and an amused twinkle in his blue eyes.

"Ain't heard nothin' o' Ed, I s'pose?" he asked in a kind of bellow. Mrs. Smith shook her head. Bill, with a delicacy very striking in such a great giant, rolled his quid in his mouth, and said:

"Didn't know but you had. I hear two or three of the Sand Lake boys are comin'. Left New Orleenes some time this week. Didn't write nothin' about Ed, but no news is good news in such cases, mother always says."

"Well, go put out yer team," said Mrs. Gray, "an' go'n bring me in some taters, an', Sim,

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you go see if you c'n find some corn. Sadie, you put on the water to bile. Come now, hustle yer boots, all o' yeh. If I feed this yer crowd, we've got to have some raw materials. If y' think I'm goin' to feed yeh on pie—you're jest mightily mistaken."

The children went off into the fields, the girls put dinner on to boil, and then went to change their dresses and fix their hair. "Somebody might come," they said.

"Land sakes, *I hope* not! I don't know where in time I'd set 'em, 'less they'd eat at the second table," Mrs. Gray laughed, in pretended dismay.

The two older boys, who had served their time in the army, lay out on the grass before the house, and whittled and talked desultorily about the war and the crops, and planned buying a threshing-machine. The older girls and Mrs. Smith helped enlarge the table and put on the dishes, talking all the time in that cheery, incoherent, and meaningful way a group of such women have,—a conversation to be taken for its spirit rather than for its letter,

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though Mrs. Gray at last got the ear of them all and dissertated at length on girls.

"Girls in love ain't no use in the whole blessed week," she said. "Sundays they're a-lookin' down the road, expectin' he'll *come*. Sunday afternoons they can't think o' nothin' else, 'cause he's *here*. Monday mornin's they're sleepy and kind o' dreamy and slimsy, and good f'r nothin' on Tuesday and Wednesday. Thursday they git absent-minded, an' begin to look off toward Sunday agin, an' mope aroun' and let the dishwater git cold, right under their noses. Friday they break dishes, an' go off in the best room an' snivel, an' look out o' the winder. Saturdays they have queer spurts o' workin' like all p'ssessed, an' spurts o' frizzin' their hair. An' Sunday they begin it all over agin."

The girls giggled and blushed, all through this tirade from their mother, their broad faces and powerful frames anything but suggestive of lackadaisical sentiment. But Mrs. Smith said:

"Now, Mrs. Gray, I hadn't ought to stay to dinner. You've got——"

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"Now you set right down! If any of them girls' beaus comes, they'll have to take what's left, that's all. They ain't s'posed to have much appetite, nohow. No, you're goin' to stay if they starve, an' they ain't no danger o' that."

At one o'clock the long table was piled with boiled potatoes, cords of boiled corn on the cob, squash and pumpkin pies, hot biscuit, sweet pickles, bread and butter, and honey. Then one of the girls took down a conch-shell from a nail, and going to the door, blew a long, fine, free blast, that showed there was no weakness of lungs in her ample chest.

Then the children came out of the forest of corn, out of the creek, out of the loft of the barn, and out of the garden.

"They come to their feed f'r all the world jest like the pigs when y' holler 'poo-ee!' See 'em scoot!" laughed Mrs. Gray, every wrinkle on her face shining with delight.

The men shut up their jack-knives, and surrounded the horse-trough to souse their faces in the cold, hard water, and in a few moments the table was filled with a merry crowd, and a row of wistful-eyed youngsters circled the

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kitchen wall, where they stood first on one leg and then on the other, in impatient hunger.

"Now pitch in, Mrs. Smith," said Mrs. Gray, presiding over the table. "You know these men critters. They'll eat every grain of it, if yeh give 'em a chance. I swan, they're made o' India-rubber, their stomachs is, I know it."

"Haf to eat to work," said Bill, gnawing a cob with a swift, circular motion that rivalled a corn-sheller in results.

"More like workin' to eat," put in one of the girls, with a giggle. "More eat 'n work with you."

"*You* needn't say anything, Net. Any one that'll eat seven ears——"

"I didn't, no such thing. You piled your cobs on my plate."

"That'll do to tell Ed Varney. It won't go down here where we know yeh."

"Good land! Eat all yeh want! They's plenty more in the fiel's, but I can't afford to give you young uns tea. The tea is for us women-folks, and 'specially f'r Mis' Smith an' Bill's wife. We're a-goin' to tell fortunes by it."

One by one the men filled up and shoved

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back, and one by one the children slipped into their places, and by two o'clock the women alone remained around the débris-covered table, sipping their tea and telling fortunes.

As they got well down to the grounds in the cup, they shook them with a circular motion in the hand, and then turned them bottom-side-up quickly in the saucer, then twirled them three or four times one way, and three or four times the other, during a breathless pause. Then Mrs. Gray lifted the cup, and, gazing into it with profound gravity, pronounced the impending fate.

It must be admitted that, to a critical observer, she had abundant preparation for hitting close to the mark, as when she told the girls that "somebody was comin'." "It's a man," she went on gravely. "He is cross-eyed——"

"Oh, you hush!" cried Nettie.

"He has red hair, and is death on b'iled corn and hot biscuit."

The others shrieked with delight.

"But he's goin' to get the mitten, that red-

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headed feller is, for I see another feller comin' up behind him."

"Oh, lemme see, lemme see!" cried Nettie.

"Keep off," said the priestess, with a lofty gesture. "His hair is black. He don't eat so much, and he works more."

The girls exploded in a shriek of laughter, and pounded their sister on the back.

At last came Mrs. Smith's turn, and she was trembling with excitement as Mrs. Gray again composed her jolly face to what she considered a proper solemnity of expression.

"Somebody is comin' to *you*," she said, after a long pause. "He's got a musket on his back. He's a soldier. He's almost here. See?"

She pointed at two little tea-stems, which really formed a faint suggestion of a man with a musket on his back. He had climbed nearly to the edge of the cup. Mrs. Smith grew pale with excitement. She trembled so she could hardly hold the cup in her hand as she gazed into it.

"It's Ed," cried the old woman. "He's on the way home. Heavens an' earth! There he is now!" She turned and waved her hand out to-

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ward the road. They rushed to the door to look where she pointed.

A man in a blue coat, with a musket on his back, was toiling slowly up the hill on the sun-bright, dusty road, toiling slowly, with bent head half hidden by a heavy knapsack. So tired it seemed that walking was indeed a process of falling. So eager to get home he would not stop, would not look aside, but plodded on, amid the cries of the locusts, the welcome of the crickets, and the rustle of the yellow wheat. Getting back to God's country, and his wife and babies!

Laughing, crying, trying to call him and the children at the same time, the little wife, almost hysterical, snatched her hat and ran out into the yard. But the soldier had disappeared over the hill into the hollow beyond, and, by the time she had found the children, he was too far away for her voice to reach him. And, besides, she was not sure it was her husband, for he had not turned his head at their shouts. This seemed so strange. Why didn't he stop to rest at his old neighbor's house? Tortured by hope and doubt, she hurried up the coolly as fast

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as she could push the baby wagon, the blue-coated figure just ahead pushing steadily, silently forward up the coolly.

When the excited, panting little group came in sight of the gate they saw the blue-coated figure standing, leaning upon the rough rail fence, his chin on his palms, gazing at the empty house. His knapsack, canteen, blankets, and musket lay upon the dusty grass at his feet.

He was like a man lost in a dream. His wide, hungry eyes devoured the scene. The rough lawn, the little unpainted house, the field of clear yellow wheat behind it, down across which streamed the sun, now almost ready to touch the high hill to the west, the crickets crying merrily, a cat on the fence near by, dreaming, unmindful of the stranger in blue——

How peaceful it all was. O God! How far removed from all camps, hospitals, battle lines. A little cabin in a Wisconsin coolly, but it was majestic in its peace. How did he ever leave it for those years of tramping, thirsting, killing?

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Trembling, weak with emotion, her eyes on the silent figure, Mrs. Smith hurried up to the fence. Her feet made no noise in the dust and grass, and they were close upon him before he knew of them. The oldest boy ran a little ahead. He will never forget that figure, that face. It will always remain as something epic, that return of the private. He fixed his eyes on the pale face covered with a ragged beard.

"Who *are* you, sir?" asked the wife, or rather, started to ask, for he turned, stood a moment, and then cried:

"Emma!"

"Edward!"

The children stood in a curious row to see their mother kiss this bearded, strange man, the elder girl sobbing sympathetically with her mother. Illness had left the soldier partly deaf, and this added to the strangeness of his manner.

But the youngest child stood away, even after the girl had recognized her father and kissed him. The man turned then to the baby, and said in a curiously unpaternal tone:

"Come here, my little man; don't you know

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me?" But the baby backed away under the fence and stood peering at him critically.

"My little man!" What meaning in those words! This baby seemed like some other woman's child, and not the infant he had left in his wife's arms. The war had come between him and his baby—he was only a strange man to him, with big eyes; a soldier, with mother hanging to his arm, and talking in a loud voice.

"And this is Tom," the private said, drawing the oldest boy to him. "*He'll* come and see me. *He* knows his poor old pap when he comes home from the war."

The mother heard the pain and reproach in his voice and hastened to apologize.

"You've changed so, Ed. He can't know yeh. This is papa, Teddy; come and kiss him—Tom and Mary do. Come, won't you?" But Teddy still peered through the fence with solemn eyes, well out of reach. He resembled a half-wild kitten that hesitates, studying the tones of one's voice.

"I'll fix him," said the soldier, and sat down to undo his knapsack, out of which he drew

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three enormous and very red apples. After giving one to each of the older children, he said:

"*Now* I guess he'll come. Eh, my little man? Now come see your pap."

Teddy crept slowly under the fence, assisted by the overzealous Tommy, and a moment later was kicking and squalling in his father's arms. Then they entered the house, into the sitting room, poor, bare, art-forsaken little room, too, with its rag carpet, its square clock, and its two or three chromos and pictures from *Harper's Weekly* pinned about.

"Emma, I'm all tired out," said Private Smith, as he flung himself down on the carpet as he used to do, while his wife brought a pillow to put under his head, and the children stood about munching their apples.

"Tommy, you run and get me a pan of chips, and Mary, you get the tea-kettle on, and I'll go and make some biscuit."

And the soldier talked. Question after question he poured forth about the crops, the cattle, the renter, the neighbors. He slipped his heavy government brogan shoes off his poor, tired,

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blistered feet, and lay out with utter, sweet relaxation. He was a free man again, no longer a soldier under command. At supper he stopped once, listened and smiled. "That's old Spot. I know her voice. I s'pose that's her calf out there in the pen. I can't milk her to-night, though. I'm too tired. But I tell you, I'd like a drink o' her milk. What's become of old Rove?"

"He died last winter. Poisoned, I guess." There was a moment of sadness for them all. It was some time before the husband spoke again, in a voice that trembled a little.

"Poor old feller! He'd 'a' known me half a mile away. I expected him to come down the hill to meet me. It 'ud 'a' been more like comin' home if I could 'a' seen him comin' down the road an' waggin' his tail, an' laughin' that way he has. I tell yeh, it kind o' took hold o' me to see the blinds down an' the house shut up."

"But, yeh see, we—we expected you'd write again 'fore you started. And then we thought we'd see you if you *did* come," she hastened to explain.

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"Well, I ain't worth a cent on writin'. Besides, it's just as well yeh didn't know when I was comin'. I tell you, it sounds good to hear them chickens out there, an' turkeys, an' the crickets. Do you know they don't have just the same kind o' crickets down South? Who's Sam hired t' help cut yer grain?"

"The Ramsey boys."

"Looks like a good crop; but I'm afraid I won't do much gettin' it cut. This cussed fever an' ague has got me down pretty low. I don't know when I'll get rid of it. I'll bet I've took twenty-five pounds of quinine if I've taken a bit. Gimme another biscuit. I tell yeh, they taste good, Emma. I ain't had anything like it— Say, if you'd 'a' hear'd me braggin' to th' boys about your butter 'n' biscuits I'll bet your ears 'ud 'a' burnt."

The private's wife colored with pleasure. "Oh, you're always a-braggin' about your things. Everybody makes good butter."

"Yes; old lady Snyder, for instance."

"Oh, well, she ain't to be mentioned. She's Dutch."

"Or old Mis' Snively. One more cup o' tea,

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Mary. That's my girl! I'm feeling better already. I just b'lieve the matter with me is, I'm *starved*."

This was a delicious hour, one long to be remembered. They were like lovers again. But their tenderness, like that of a typical American family, found utterance in tones, rather than in words. He was praising her when praising her biscuit, and she knew it. They grew soberer when he showed where he had been struck, one ball burning the back of his hand, one cutting away a lock of hair from his temple, and one passing through the calf of his leg. The wife shuddered to think how near she had come to being a soldier's widow. Her waiting no longer seemed hard. This sweet, glorious hour effaced it all.

Then they rose, and all went out into the garden and down to the barn. He stood beside her while she milked old Spot. They began to plan fields and crops for next year.

His farm was weedy and encumbered, a rascally renter had run away with his machinery (departing between two days), his children needed clothing, the years were coming upon

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him, he was sick and emaciated, but his heroic soul did not quail. With the same courage with which he had faced his Southern march he entered upon a still more hazardous future.

Oh, that mystic hour! The pale man with big eyes standing there by the well, with his young wife by his side. The vast moon swinging above the eastern peaks, the cattle winding down the pasture slopes with jangling bells, the crickets singing, the stars blooming out sweet and far and serene; the katydids rhythmically calling, the little turkeys crying querulously, as they settled to roost in the poplar tree near the open gate. The voices at the well drop lower, the little ones nestle in their father's arms at last, and Teddy falls asleep there.

The common soldier of the American volunteer army had returned. His war with the South was over, and his fight, his daily running fight with nature and against the injustice of his fellow-men, was begun again.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

LIBRARY AIDS FOR READERS

WHAT is reading? Is it merely recognizing the printed symbols? Is it discovering the meanings of those printed symbols—grasping the thought presented by the author?¹ Does reading stimulate in you a desire to interpret these meanings, these thoughts in terms of your own experiences? To what extent is the value of your interpretations dependent upon your interests, your experiences—real or vicarious, your temperament, your ability to think things through? Has it ever occurred to you that what a reader takes away from a book he reads is dependent upon what he takes to the book, and upon the resources he had at his command to enrich his knowledge of life?

A reader's use of the dictionary, the encyclo-

¹ For a fuller discussion of these reading suggestions consult R. L. Lyman: *The Mind at Work in Studying, Thinking, and Reading*. A source book and discussion manual. Chicago, 1924. Scott, Foresman and Company.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

pedia, and other books of valuable information about words, people and their many activities, places, flowers, birds, books, religions, governments, and other national and international affairs is a factor that determines the extent of his fund of general and specific knowledge. Many men and women who have not had in their youth the advantages of training in the use of facilities that are available in public and school libraries hesitate to display their ignorance by enquiring about problems that arise in their reading. As a result their natural curiosity, not satisfied, wanes, and their cumulation of significant data is retarded. To know how to discover information desired contributes toward efficiency in the career of every individual.

You will discover the true worth of reference books best through your use of them. In your attempt to answer a few of the questions on the biography of Hamlin Garland and on *The Long Trail* you will find the source books suggested helpful. Special assignments to individuals or to groups of three or five students in your class on such subjects as panning gold,

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the gold rush of '49, the Klondike, your favorite authors in America, your favorite authors in England, and places visited by Hamlin Garland will stimulate interest in using library aids for readers. You and your classmates co-operating in a small group will respond to the challenge to give to other groups authentic information gathered in your research studies motivated by your reading of the life of Hamlin Garland and *The Long Trail*.

For correct pronunciation and definitions of words consult an academic or an unabridged dictionary.

For information about famous men and women consult:

Dictionaries and encyclopedias:

Dictionary of American Biography for
biographies of American authors not
living today

Dictionary of National Biography for
biographies of English authors not liv-
ing today

Living Authors; and *Authors Today and
Yesterday*

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Who's Who (published yearly) for data about Englishmen and famous people of other countries living at the time of publication

Who's Who in America (published yearly) for data about famous Americans living at the time of publication

Magazine indexes:

Poole's Index to Periodical Literature for English and American articles published in magazines from 1802 to 1907

Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature for articles from 1900 to date

International Index to Periodicals for magazine articles from all parts of the world, 1907 to date

For information about Hamlin Garland's writing consult:

The Book Review Digest published monthly with a semi-annual cumulation in August and an annual cumulation in February. A digest of reviews selected from *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, *The Atlantic*

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Monthly, The Bookman, The Saturday Review of Literature, and from the book-review sections of the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, *The Times* of London, and other American and English publications

For information about places consult:

Atlases, dictionaries, and encyclopedias
Lippincott's *New Gazetteer*

For general information consult:

Book of Knowledge

Dictionaries, encyclopedias, histories, and mythologies

Lincoln Library of Essential Information
Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature

Year books for current information on national and international issues:

American Year Book

New International Year Book

New Standard Encyclopedia Year Book

Statesman's Year Book

World Almanac

QUESTIONS

Introduction

1. Trace a map of the United States. Indicate on the map the homes of Hamlin Garland and the places he visited in America from the date of his birth to the present day.
2. After you have read "The Return of a Private," ask your parents and grandparents for information about the activities of your ancestors in the Civil War. The hardships they and their families endured during that period of strife and suffering will be as interesting to you and to your classmates as were the experiences of the Garlands. Plan to tell or to write for class reading at least one of the traditions that have been cherished by your family.
3. Find evidences of the Celtic poetic strain inherited by Hamlin Garland suggested in the account of his life and in *The Long Trail*.

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4. Have you read any stories about log-rollers? Have you seen their feats of strength and skill displayed in their logrolling contests? Perhaps a group of students will volunteer to inform the class of the work of the logrollers. You will enjoy reading *Swift Rivers* by Cornelia Meigs.

5. In what connections have you heard the word *caravan* used? What is its significance on page xxi?

6. As you read the introductory pages and *The Long Trail*, make a list of unusual and unfamiliar words used. Check those that you wish to add to your vocabulary. Of what value is a large vocabulary? Which of your friends are the most interesting and entertaining—those who have expressive and picturesque words at their command, or those whose vocabularies are limited?

7. Define *Yankee*. Many words have interesting histories. Which books in your school and public libraries offer histories of words?

8. How many books read by Hamlin Garland in his youth are favorites of yours?

9. Make a list of the poems by poets mentioned that you have read and enjoyed.

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10. How many of the birds known to Hamlin Garland in his youth would you be able to identify?

11. Which varieties of flowers that grew wild in the prairies are cultivated in the gardens of today?

12. Which kinds of animals mentioned have you seen in their natural habitat, at a circus, or in a zoo? Which are known to you through pictures only?

13. Explain: "My bearing became confident and easy. Money had straightened my back."
(Page xxxvii.)

14. Who are the present-day outstanding Shakespearean actors? Has Hamlin Garland praised Edwin Booth too highly? How does he rank among actors of Shakespearean roles? Consult works on the drama in the library.

15. Read pages 274 to 278 in *A Son of the Middle Border*. Make a list of places of literary and historical interest visited by Hamlin Garland and his brother. Name those places in and about Boston you have seen or are planning to see. Of what value are visits to such places

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to one not familiar with their literary or historical significance?

16. Explain: "He took up a claim." (Page xli.)

17. Account for the number of foreigners among the land-seekers bound for Dakota. (Page xli.)

18. Are government lands available today for those who wish to claim them? What conditions govern claims?

19. In the account of Hamlin Garland's life select quotations from his writings that reveal his skill in painting word pictures. Plan to read to the class the paragraph you like best and to state the reasons for your choice.

20. Throughout the account of his life find evidence of Hamlin Garland's interest in great personalities. What had each accomplished to attract him?

21. What characteristics of Hamlin Garland's won a place for him among American realists? The authors who applauded his first volume, *Main Travelled Roads*, had made what contributions to American literature?

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22. To what did President Theodore Roosevelt refer when he said to Hamlin Garland, "We are in for trouble with Spain and I must be on the job?"

23. What is *proof-reading*?

24. List books of general reference in which are accounts of the life and works of the English authors by whom the Garlands were entertained in England. In these books and in Hamlin Garland's books find some interesting information about each author to tell to your classmates.

25. Who was Inness? (Page lxiii.)

26. List the influences that contributed to Hamlin Garland's achievements.

27. What obstacles or difficulties did he overcome in order to pursue his ideals?

28. What characteristics of the Garlands and the McClintocks are reflected in his activities?

29. Is Hamlin Garland a man you would enjoy meeting? Why?

30. To what extent does Hamlin Garland's poem "Do You Fear the Wind?" suggest his life as a boy and a man?

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DO YOU FLAR THE WIND?

Do you fear the force of the wind,
The slash of the rain?
Go face them and fight them,
Be savage again.
Go hungry and cold like the wolf,
Go wade like the crane;
The palms of your hands will thicken,
The skin of your cheek will tan,
You'll grow ragged and weary and swarthy,
But you'll walk like a man!

31. Make a chronological list of Hamlin Garland's writings. Use library aids that provide such data. For your classmates prepare a review of one of his short stories.

Chapter I

1. Locate the Klondike on a map of the United States and Alaska.

2. Try to discover the degree of interest in the Klondike and the gold rush of the late nineties by searching for titles of magazine articles listed under Klondike and gold rush

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in *Poole's Index to Periodical Literature* for the years 1897 to 1900. What stories have you read about the Klondike?

3. What stories have you read about the gold rush of '49? Find information in an encyclopedia and in your histories about the gold seekers of that earlier generation, when Jack's father was a young man.

4. On page 7 reference is made to Jack's thoughts of enlisting in the army. In 1898 what stimulus was there for enlisting in the army? Why would he go South in case he enlisted?

5. Trace a map of the great Northwest. Indicate on it the course Jack will follow on the long trail, which begins at his home town.

6. Do you believe Jack will be successful in his adventure? Why?

Chapter II

1. On the map of the American and the British Northwest, which you have traced, insert the mountains, streams, lakes, trails, and

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settlements that Jack points out to his friends on the map.

2. In what spirit did his friends ask for the privilege "to grub-stake" him in his undertaking? Explain the meaning of *grub-stake*; the origin of the word. Is it an American or a British contribution to the English language? (See the *Oxford Dictionary*.)

3. What traits of character did Jack reveal in his acceptance of the roll of bills offered him by his friends?

4. What means has Hamlin Garland used to surround Jack's seat-mate with an atmosphere of mystery?

5. What were the varied interests for Jack beyond the windows of the tourist-car in which he travelled to Ashcroft?

6. Name the states through which the train carried him. Outline them on your map.

7. What spirit prevailed among the passengers? What were the many interests of the travellers on the three days' journey?

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Chapter III

1. At Ashcroft how was Jack's courage tested?
2. Describe and distinguish between an *apparejo* and a *parfleche*.
3. What was Jack's first impression of his trail partners?
4. Comment on the terms drawn up for the three companions on the trail.
5. What is your first impression of Mason?
6. Have you changed your opinion of Jack's dark-browed, dark-bearded seat-mate?

Chapter IV

1. Explain the meaning of Mason's comment, page 40, "To-morrow comes early in this climate."
2. What is a tarpaulin?
3. Comment on the value of first impressions. How do you account for Jack's ability to appraise the Colonel, Mason, Connery, and Davis?
4. Had Jack kept a diary or a daily journal,

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what do you believe he would have recorded at the end of each day since his departure from Cedarbank?

Chapter V

1. What indications are there in this chapter that Jack is a keen observer?

2. How do you account for Jack's good fortune in being taken into the camp of the Colonel and Mason?

3. Read aloud the remarkable word picture of the trail on pages 50 and 51.

4. ". . . hope always leads the way for the young," writes Hamlin Garland at the end of this chapter. Do you agree with him? Explain.

Chapter VI

1. What are savannas? What is a corral?

2. How does Hamlin Garland keep before the reader the air of mystery surrounding the Colonel? What means does he use to emphasize this again?

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3. To what extent did the sun or the lack of sun affect Jack's spirits on the trail? Are young people, as a rule, affected by the weather?

4. What is Chinook?

5. Account for the lack of knowledge of horses revealed by these Carrier Indians, natives of this wild country of fir-clad ridges that "met and mingled with the desolate rain-clouds."

Chapter VII

1. Of what significance are brands on horses? In an encyclopedia find information about the practice of branding horses to discover when and where that means of identification was used first. Do you consider it a humane practice?

2. How are corduroy roads constructed? Account for the application of the word corduroy to material used in wearing apparel.

3. Has Hamlin Garland made the scene more vivid by using the following comparisons?

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"Magnificent mountains, blazing like armored warriors wearing helmets of snow and breast-plates of ice, rose all about the trail."

4. Explain Mason's comment, "You seem to be acquiring epidermis."

5. What is meant by "the sorrel outfit?"

6. How long has Jack been away from home?

7. What is a divide?

8. Explain: "They know as much about canoes as a cow-boy does about a cayuse."

9. How does Jack show the spirit he inherited from his pioneer father?

Chapter VIII

1. Explain the meaning of the following: irrepressible as a box of monkeys; glacial water; bucking bronco; season-checked; fire-devastated firs; leek-like plants; writhing, diabolic shrubs; and endless succession of morasses; locoed; quaint phraseology; blazed tree-trunks; a tenderfoot.

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2. What traits of character are revealed by the Colonel and Mason in this chapter?
3. Select passages that illustrate Hamlin Garland's skill in painting word pictures.
4. Find examples of his use of comparisons that add to your interest in his comments.

Chapter IX

1. *Barrister* is a term Englishmen use; what is the corresponding term used by Americans?
2. What did Mason mean when he said, "Those lads are sure thoroughbreds?"
3. What are marmots, porcupines, and ptarmigan?
4. What is a water-shed?
5. Explain: "There was something thrilling, something epic in the thought that only the unbroken wilderness lay for hundreds of miles on every side."
6. What is the significance of the title of this chapter?

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Chapter X

1. After the Colonel had explained the mystery surrounding his pursuit of the men with three bald-faced sorrel horses, did Jack's question addressed to Mason surprise you? Why?
2. What is a grouse? How large is it?
3. What is the significance of Mason's comment at the end of this chapter?

Chapter XI

1. Do you admire Mason? Why? Prepare a list of adjectives that describe him.

Chapter XII

1. What traits of Mason's character are revealed in this chapter?
2. What characteristics of the Colonel, not often disclosed, are suggested in his attitude toward Mason and Jack?
3. Was the Colonel's acceptance of the fate of Carrick in accord with his nature?
4. Explain the meaning of the following ex-

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pressions: "We will cache our canoe on the willows"; "the boat dancing high on the waters, running sidewise like a pitching bronco"; "I'm a bronco-buster"; "He's stood this trip like a veteran."

5. Compare "the thunder of the fall" and the rapids of "the second fork" with falls you have heard and seen.

Chapter XIII

1. What details are offered in this chapter to give the reader an idea of the true significance of the title of the book?

2. Explain Mason's comment, "Jack, you've stood it like a Piute."

3. Account for Mason's remark, "I wouldn't mind hunting gold if I could rope it."

4. Point out evidences of Mason's ingenuity, skill, modesty, western philosophy, and leadership.

5. Select paragraphs that reveal Hamlin Garland's skill in painting word pictures. Is his success due to his choice of words, to com-

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parisons and contrasts introduced, or to some other factor?

Chapter XIV

1. What had Jack gained from his experience on the long trail?

2. Complete your map of the long trail followed by Jack as far as Glenora.

Chapter XV

1. Do you feel as Jack does about the Colonel? On page 164 is the following statement: "He's been good to me, Mason, but I can't like him."

2. Comment on Jack's courage and spirit of adventure in the bear hunt. What had he learned through this experience about the habits of bears along these salmon streams of the Northwest? Can you verify this information by referring to other stories you have read? What reference books listed on page 309

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provide scientific information about the activities of bears?

3. Explain Mason's comment on page 173: ". . . This river is falling. This is the last boat this season."

4. Try to realize the full significance in the experience of the gold seekers reflected in this statement on page 176: "It was an inglorious end to all their hopes and plans."

5. Explain, ". . . It's a big placer camp." The chance meeting with these passengers from Skagway who brought the news of the rush into the Atlin Lake country changed the course of Jack's career. Is the course of one's career in real life ever affected by chance meetings?

Chapter XVI

1. With the departure of the south-bound boat the Colonel passed out of the lives of Jack and Mason. Account for the contrast in the nature of Jack's last comment about the Colonel and Mason's.

2. What is your estimate of the Colonel?

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Base your judgment of his character on what he thinks, on what he says and how he expresses himself, on what he does or fails to do, on his motives, on what others say of him, and on his ability to inspire confidence.

3. "To dream dreams is the privilege of youth." (Page 180.) Of what value is this privilege? Had Jack profited by dreaming dreams? How?

4. Explain the force of the comparison between the trailers and ants.

5. Try to visualize Jack's interests enroute from Glenora to Skagway.

6. Explain the allusion in Mason's remark on page 187: "It would be funny if after going round Robinson's barn we should win out, wouldn't it?"

7. What did Mason mean when he said to Jack, "I'm no Swiss guide?" (Page 186.)

8. Indicate on your map the course of Jack's journey by boat from Glenora to Skagway.

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Chapter XVII

1. Explain: "The whole flat on which the town stood was indeed the work of this stream in its elder, more potential days." Which reference book listed offers information of the work of silt deposits by rivers?

2. What is a cordon of mountains? Find a picture to illustrate.

3. What are the evidences that Siebert is "a man of education?"

4. Explain the meaning of the following: tenderfoot; season-checked; "I've staked a fellow on this Atlin run"; corduroy bridges; miasma; ominous sounds; "we're due to make burros of ourselves"; caribou; gold nuggets; sluiceboxes; sluiceway.

5. Distinguish between the Northwest Territory and British Columbia.

6. To what extent did Mason's habit of keen observation win for him full possession of the general situation?

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Chapter XVIII

1. Is it true that a man's career sometimes hinges on such small things as sharing a meal with a stranger? Verify your answer.

2. How long had Jack been away from home when he took his claim in the Northwest Territory, his reward at the end of the Long Trail?

3. Explain this statement on page 216, "That claim between belongs to the queen."

4. Account for the tone of camaraderie Jack noted in the words of Jack's rival as he passed him in the midnight race for claims.

Chapter XIX

1. From this and the preceding chapter what information have you gained about the real significance of the expression "gold rush?"

2. In order to stake his claim what was it necessary for Jack to do?

3. Explain the statement on page 225: "He met his Waterloo."

4. Explain the meaning of the following: "They all found time . . . to pan dirt on their

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claims" (page 227); nugget; "pot-hole proposition"; bed-rock; placer-mining (page 228); "a whoop like a crazy Comanche." (Page 229.)

Chapter XX

1. With reference to the last paragraph on page 234 comment on Hamlin Garland's skill in painting word pictures. In the preceding chapters find other examples of descriptive paragraphs that you enjoyed.

2. By direct reference to what Mason says and what he does explain and verify the truth of the statement: "The sterling worth of Mason's character came out in this winter."

3. What traits of the Siwashes does Joe Boston reveal?

Chapter XXI

1. Was it a disappointment to you not to be able to accompany Jack on his homeward trail as you had over "the long trail?" Do you approve of Hamlin Garland's device of permitting

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you to share Jack's experiences with his friends George May and Owen Gilbert? Why?

2. Does thirty thousand dollars seem to be a fabulous sum for Jack and Mason to earn through a year's work on their claim? Perhaps it might be of interest to read articles published in magazines during the gold rush of the last years of the nineteenth century to discover what the net returns of gold miners amounted to in the Klondike region. What reference book lists such articles?

Chapter XXII

1. Complete your map.

2. What changes did Jack's friends, his mother, and sister discover in him after his absence of one year and a half?

3. Do you consider that Jack is worthy of Mason's estimate of him in the telegram sent to Mrs. Henderson in answer to her message of appreciation of all he had done for her son? Make your answer convincing by recalling re-

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vealing incidents in Jack's conduct of himself in *The Long Trail*.

4. Is Hamlin Garland's *The Long Trail* a book you will recommend to your friends? Comment upon the interests the book provides for those who love tales of adventure, for those who respond to the lure of a mountain trail, for those who admire integrity in a youthful hero, and for those who have learned that vicarious experiences gained through reading enrich life.

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